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**The Sweat of the Brain:
Representations of Intellectual Labour in the Writings of Edmund
Burke, William Cobbett, William Hazlitt, and Thomas Carlyle**

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines representations of intellectual work in the writings of Edmund Burke, William Cobbett, William Hazlitt, and Thomas Carlyle, focusing on their tendency to draw on an analogy between mental and manual labour when representing their own work to themselves and to their readers. It is my argument that while the assimilation of intellectual to physical labour can be seen as a symptom of political bad faith--suggesting, as it does, that thinking and writing are as painful or as difficult as digging and ploughing--the primary purposes of the analogy in the works of these four cultural commentators are, first, to forge rhetorical alliances with ordinary labourers, and, second, to attack other intellectuals engaged in what are alleged to be less arduous and less valuable forms of intellectual endeavour. By blaming the irresponsible activity of disaffected literary men for the political upheaval of the French Revolution, Burke set the terms for debate about the role of educated and literate men in society, a debate in which, for the first time, intellectuals competed for the allegiance of the labouring population. The analogy with manual labour was a key rhetorical site in the struggle to define an ideology for intellectuals, since it claims to ground the speaker or writer in the labouring community at large. For each author, I undertake close readings of several key texts to demonstrate the prevalence of the comparison with manual labour in the representation of intellectual activity. The political-ideological valence of the analogy is never straightforward, I contend, and it often occurs alongside an impulse to emphasise, as well as to elide, what are assumed to be the fundamental differences between mental and manual activity. We witness in the writings of Burke, Cobbett, Hazlitt, and Carlyle a recognisable mode of self-representation, for the desire to assimilate intellectual to material work has persisted. While most accounts of intellectuals' self-definition stress the ideal of detachment or equanimity, my argument suggests that we can see, in the combative prose of these four polemicists, a different historical prototype for the representational practices by which intellectuals have forged their own identities.

All intellectuals represent something to their audiences, and in so doing represent themselves to themselves. Whether you are an academic, or a bohemian essayist, or a consultant to the Defense Department, you do what you do according to an idea or representation you have of yourself as doing that thing.

Edward Said, *Representations of the Intellectual* , xv

Chapter One. Head Work: Intellectuals and Labour

This thesis examines representations of intellectual work in British culture between 1790 and 1840, focusing on the tendency of writers to draw on an analogy between mental and manual labour when representing their own work of thinking and writing to themselves and to their readers. Although the analogy has a pre-history, I argue that following Edmund Burke's blistering indictment, in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), of the activities of men of letters responsible for instigating revolution, writers' self-representations were endowed with a new ideological force, becoming both a declaration of political loyalties and a stance on the proper role of intellectuals. I examine the occurrence of the analogy between mental and manual labour in the writings of four influential social and cultural commentators: Burke, William Cobbett, William Hazlitt, and Thomas Carlyle. The suggestion that thinking and writing are as difficult as digging and ploughing may be seen, on one hand, as a symptom of political bad faith, but the assimilation of mental to manual work may also evince a sympathy for the labouring poor. The articulation of a particular attitude towards, and even solidarity with, the labouring population is not the only intention of the analogy, however. In the works of these four public intellectuals, I contend, a further motive for the assimilation of mental to manual labour is to differentiate oneself, politically, from other intellectuals, writers and politicians, engaged in what are alleged to be less arduous, less valuable, or less integrated kinds of intellectual activity.¹

In the period covered by this thesis there were material changes in the working conditions of the majority of British people, the impact of which was marked, for instance, by the Luddite response to changing work practices.² There were also transformations in the representational value of work and labour: the difference, for example, between Burke's view of labour as a curse, mankind's common doom, and Carlyle's incantatory celebration of his Gospel of Work. Despite these changes, the analogy between mental and manual labour persists throughout the period as a way of imaging the work of writing and of conceiving of the relationship between distinct activities. The recurrence of the metaphors and figures of speech which attempt to yoke together mental and manual work is all the more striking because the assertion of an identity between intellectual and physical toil conflicts with the more general cultural belief that these were not only distinct but incompatible activities, and that the same man or class of men could not do both.

The world of work in mid-nineteenth-century America, according to Nicholas Bromell, was "understood primarily by way of a distinction between manual and mental labor," a division which was crucial in defining and legitimating a hierarchical relationship between classes and sexes, and which was underpinned by the already existent ontological dichotomy of mind (or soul) and body (7-9, 22-4). Nevertheless, Bromell concludes that the writers he studies eventually found inadequate their culture's defining separation of mental and manual labour as a way of thinking about their own work and the work of others. At the same time as they continued to conceive of the organisation of social labour through the conventional division--and

remained attached to the privileges that accrued to them as a result of this division-- Bromell argues that the writers he studies resisted this distinction for its "erotic inadequacies and its political inequities" (241-2). In early nineteenth-century Britain, as in ante-bellum America, the separation between the toil of the body and the toil of the head was fundamental to conceptions of society. Certainly for the writers discussed here, the division between physical and intellectual activities was axiomatic, and all four writers, even the materialist Cobbett, take for granted the superiority of mind over body. It is this principle, for instance, which informs Burke's "chain of subordination" in a hierarchical rural society:

For in all things, whatever, the mind is the most valuable and most important; and in this scale the whole of agriculture is in a natural and just order; the beast is as an informing principle to the plough and cart; the labourer is as reason to the beast; and the farmer is as a thinking and presiding principle to the labourer. An attempt to break this chain of subordination in any part is equally absurd. (*Writings and Speeches* 9: 125)

In Burke's scheme, each class of person is allocated a fixed place in society according to an innate mental superiority, which Burke takes to be the providential basis for a social distinction between rich and poor. The same idea informs Carlyle's "Occasional Discourse On the Negro Question," where he argues that the purpose of all government is to order human relationships so that the secular order corresponds to the one clearly intended by the divine allocation of capabilities: "If precisely the Wisest Man were at the top of society, and the next-wisest next, and so on till we reached the

Demerara Nigger (from whom downwards through the horse, etc., there is no question hitherto), then were this a perfect world, the extreme *maximum* of wisdom produced in it" (*Works* 29: 361). Despite these assumptions about the essential difference between human beings, however, Burke, Cobbett, Hazlitt, and Carlyle, like their American counterparts, had reasons to elide as well as emphasise the differences between mental and manual labour, and had motives for reuniting the conceptually separated activities through the analogy of mental and manual work. In the period 1790-1840, the figures of speech which hitch intellectual to physical labour were, this thesis argues, deployed in order to declare a position on the political role of the intellectual. While Bromell's project is to map the cultural meanings of "work" and "labour" in the ante-bellum period by examining the way American writers described their own work and the work of others (4-6), I examine intellectuals' representations of their own work not in order to elaborate the meaning of work/labour, but to describe the conflicting ideological effects of the analogies that assimilate mental to manual labour.

What, then, are the political or ideological valences of intellectuals' identification of mental with manual work? It could be argued, and indeed it often is argued, that any theory of labour that fails to disaggregate "work" serves primarily to deceive the ordinary worker. Hence, J. K. Galbraith, in his influential *The Affluent Society*, calls the effort of economists to assert "the identity of all classes of labour"--physical, mental, artistic, or managerial--"one of the oldest and most effective obfuscations in the field of social science." While declaring the homogeneity of work

has enabled economists to construct a general theory of wages, the possibility of identifying themselves with those who do hard physical labour has also served to assuage the democratic conscience of the more favoured groups in both capitalist and communist societies (260-61). The fact that the worthiness of labour is proclaimed by the ideologues of both capitalist and socialist societies suggests a high degree of consensus on fundamental values between these competing orthodoxies, as Galbraith intimates (Anthony, *The Ideology of Work* 7-8). It is important to note that both those accounts of the labouring process which view all labour alike as an unfortunate necessity and those which celebrate the dignity of all labour are potentially deceptive. On one hand, the view of labour as a common curse, the result of original sin, tends to generalise the physical labourer's suffering to all men in order to reconcile the labourers to their lamentable condition; conversely, those ideas of labour which stress its dignity are intended to mislead the common labourer into believing that his or her suffering is somehow laudable. Part of the problem of all representations of work is that they are written from the point of view of the intellectual. As Galbraith puts it: "Since the man who does physical work is intellectually disqualified from comparing his toil with that of the brainworker," the propositions of the latter--such as, for instance, the proposition that mental labour is just as taxing as, or even more taxing than, physical labour--are "uniquely unassailable" (261).

In the Marxian tradition of criticism the metaphors which assimilate mental to manual work get even shorter shrift. The identification of intellectual work with the "real" work which goes on in the fields or factories is usually dismissed as an attempt to

deceive the labourers and to appropriate their pains in order to alleviate the intellectual's anxieties about the lack of social utility or economic value of intellectual activity.³ Fredric Jameson has clearly articulated the materialist refutation of the attempt to obscure, through the assimilation of thinking to arduous physical toil, the privileges that result from the social division of labour. In the first chapter of *The Political Unconscious*, where he attempts to define a "properly Marxist hermeneutic," Jameson discusses at length the challenge of Althusserian (structural) Marxism to "traditional models of interpretation" (23). In the course of a lengthy and sometimes difficult discussion, largely addressed to theoretical disputes within the Marxist movement, Jameson remarks that Althusser's critique of "expressive causality" in *Reading Capital* is best deployed to attack "the structural notion of *homology* (or isomorphism, or structural parallelism)," a practice of criticism that Jameson associates in particular with Lucien Goldman. He also has in mind, however, all those attempts to create a "'materialist theory of language'" that depend on the homology between the "'production' of language in writing and speech, and economic production" (43-5). Jameson recognises that emphasising the "production" of texts has helped to divest us, as readers and critics, of the tendency to think of texts merely as objects, unified and static, but then goes on to argue that the metaphor of productivity, thus deployed, does not add very much to the conception of text as process. On the other hand, Jameson cautions, the metaphor possesses much "potential for use or misappropriation by a new ideology":

One cannot, without intellectual dishonesty, assimilate the "production" of texts [. . .] to the production of goods by factory workers: writing and thinking are not alienated labor in that sense, and it is surely fatuous for intellectuals to seek to glamorize their tasks--which for the most part can be subsumed under the rubric of the elaboration, reproduction, or critique of ideology--by assimilating them to real work on the assembly line and to the experience of the resistance of matter in genuine manual labor. (45)

To labour the point somewhat: the identification of intellectual to "real" or "genuine" (that is, physical) work is a move--made by the "producers" of ideology--which disguises the "work" of ideological reproduction, by confusing what Marx called "the superstructure" with what he termed "the base."⁴

It is not immediately clear to what Jameson refers when he writes of a "new ideology." He implies, I think, that the metaphor might be appropriated by other, less well-intentioned, intellectuals who attempt to pass off their own endeavours as equivalent to the labour of those who support the material life of the nation. Jameson's fears have been realised, at least according to Jeremy Seabrook, who in 1988 claimed that the work ethic had been recycled by the rich "for their own purposes" (17, 41). "Never in the history of labour," Seabrook believes, "has there been such a competitive claim for recognition, for the tributes due to such feats of toil as are undertaken today" (12). Ironically, while so much labour in the past was concerned with the "stern materialities" of mining and manufacture, and was consequently energy-sapping and body-deforming, the "new votaries of labour" are engaged in far more "nebulous" or

"impalpable" activities--banking, finance, insurance, administration, research and knowledge-work, consultancy, planning, media-work, advertising, design, image-making, entertainment--in short all those to whom Galbraith referred when he claimed in *The Affluent Society* to identify the emergence of a "new class" (Seabrook 10, 13).⁵ Seabrook lists figures of speech by which the rich and famous have audaciously "colonised the language of work and made it their own," and observes that this recent "expropriation of function is the least remarked and most subtle of all the manifold expropriations of the poor" (11-12, 15, 18, 20-1). For the ideological effect of this colonisation is to justify the increase in economic inequity in the eyes both of the expropriators and expropriated; having laboured to earn what they have, the rich have no need to conceal their wealth and can indulge in the most conspicuous consumption (28, 37).

It might be that, as Galbraith, Jameson and Seabrook suggest, there is something new at work in this recent appropriation by the rich of the labour of the poor, though, as I shall discuss, there is certainly nothing novel about the yoking of mental to manual work. If we accept, for the sake of argument, Jameson's proposition that all writing or intellectual activity is finally subsumable to the "elaboration, reproduction, or critique of ideology" (45), then what we want to know is what are the particular ideological motives and effects of a particular representation of mental work in this or that context. Of course, the linking of mental to material labour by intellectuals can be self-serving: it allows writers to give to thinking and writing the appearance of something solid and substantial and rescues mental work from the

charges of inutility and triviality. As Zygmunt Bauman has emphasised, however, all definitions of intellectuals and of intellectual labour are self-representations.

Representing is what intellectuals do--it is the activity itself, as Edward Said says--so all representations of intellectuals participate in the process of self-definition and self-legitimation (Bauman 8-9, 18; Said xv, 11). While the writers whom I discuss are certainly attempting to define the intellectual's role, their representations of intellectual labour are as frequently intended to distinguish between different kinds of intellectual performances as to draw boundaries between mental and manual work. I want to discriminate, too, between what Jameson calls homology, or isomorphism, and analogy. When Cobbett and Hazlitt want to give the analogy a radical inflection, for example, they are at pains to point out the metaphoric status of their assimilation of mental to manual labour.

I am seeking to understand the persistence of the analogy between mental and manual work in intellectuals' self-representations, which was already something of a cliché by 1790 and has endured beyond the Romantic period. Why do four such rhetorically sophisticated writers resort to this cliché? The prevalence of the analogy over time and within different political contexts suggests that its ideological meaning needs to be explained, rather taken for granted. I am not, therefore, looking at how the representational practices of writers and speakers construct the labouring poor, but at the way in which the labouring population is invoked in intellectuals' self-representations.⁶ This is not to say, of course, that it does not matter how the poor are depicted. I take for granted--as do Cobbett, Hazlitt, and Carlyle--that the assimilation

of intellectuals' activity to physical labour is problematic.⁷ At the same time, it is impossible to ignore that intellectual labour is almost always defined contrapuntally, in relation, that is, to material labour. From 1790, I shall claim, the analogy with physical labour was a recurring trope, a rhetorical figure to be struggled over, in what Jeffrey Cox has called a "battle" to define the political ideology of intellectuals (57).

In the work of these four writers, I argue, the analogies linking mental and manual work are employed primarily in a polemic against other head-workers, writers and politicians. Hence, when, in the following passage from the third of his *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796), Burke speaks of labour as the curse of mankind, "our common doom," the assimilation of mental and manual work seems, on one hand, to reproduce ideology in the most straightforward manner:

We have heard many plans for the relief of the "*Labouring Poor*." This puling jargon is not as innocent as it is foolish. In meddling with great affairs, weakness is never innoxious. Hitherto the name of Poor (in the sense in which it is used to excite compassion) has not been used for those who can, but for those who cannot labour--for the sick and infirm; for orphan infancy; for languishing and decrepid [sic] age; but when we affect to pity as poor those who must labour or the world cannot exist, we are trifling with the condition of mankind. It is the common doom of man that he must eat his bread by the sweat of his brow, that is by the sweat of his body, or the sweat of his mind. If this toil was inflicted as a curse, it is as might be expected from the curses of the Father of all Blessings--it is tempered with many alleviations, many

comforts. Every attempt to fly from it, and to refuse the very terms of our existence, becomes much more truly a curse [. . .]. I do not call a healthy young man, chearful in his mind, and vigorous in his arms, I cannot call such a man *poor*; I cannot pity my kind as a kind, merely because they are men. This affected pity, only tends to dissatisfy them with their condition, and to teach them to seek resources where no resources are to be found, in something else than their own industry, and frugality, and sobriety. Whatever may be the intention of those [. . .] who would discontent mankind with this strange pity, they act towards us in the consequences, as if they were our worst enemies. (*Writings and Speeches* 9: 355-6)

With his suggestion that the burden of labour falls equally on all, mental as well as manual workers, Burke seems to attempt to reconcile the labouring poor to their lot. It is important to remember, however, that Burke is not addressing the workers directly. When he uses a trope like "the sweat of the mind" he differentiates himself from other intellectuals, such as those intellectuals who, he believed, were attempting to foment disorder at home by making the poor dissatisfied with their situation. As I shall discuss in more detail in chapter two, Burke suspects that the "puling jargon" and the display of an "affected pity" are motivated not by a genuine sympathy for the poor, but by a desire to alter the domestic power-balance by inciting unrest among the populace. Those writers and thinkers who affect compassion for the labourers deny the terms of human life by suggesting that the situation of the labouring poor could be substantially ameliorated. In contrast, Burke presents himself as a realist, who sees that the

necessary and unalterable condition of human existence is labour, manual or mental. His opponents are mere dreamers, theorists whose utopian fantasies cost them nothing, and who, therefore, themselves avoid the real (mental) labour of proposing practical and implementable policies. Burke's "sweat of the mind," that is, does double duty because it can be stressed in two ways. *Mental* work is a way of differentiating his own endeavour from that of the manual workers, even as he implies that both classes of workers were amending in equal portion for an original sin; mental *work*, on the other hand, marks a distinction from other non-manual workers, from speculative intellectuals whose activities are less grounded than Burke's in the inescapable realities of material life.

By blaming the irresponsible intellectual activity of disaffected literary men for political upheaval in France, Burke initiated a debate about the role of educated and literate men in society. One way in which radical intellectuals challenged Burke's depiction of the ungrounded intellect was by reappropriating the analogy from Burke and deploying it either in their own self-definitions, or in a polemic against reactionary intellectuals and writers. For Cobbett, Hazlitt and Carlyle, the representation of intellectual labour was both a way of positioning themselves in the conflict between the two polarised social classes--rich and poor, ruling and ruled, oppressors and oppressed, non-working aristocracy and productive labourers--and a means of situating themselves with respect to other intellectuals. The analogy is used critically, for instance, in Cobbett's attack on the pro-ministerial pensioned press, in Hazlitt's attack on the "aristocracy of letters," and in Carlyle's berating of a "unworking"

aristocracy. All three writers, at some point, declare the common cause of discontented intellectual workers with material labourers, in a solidarity which ostentatiously excludes a non-working ruling class. Thus, the same analogy that Burke uses for reactionary political purposes could be employed to announce a radical, potentially revolutionary, political programme. The ideological significance of the analogy between mental and manual labour during the period 1790-1840 emerges only in the context in which it occurs--each writer represents his activity in a particular polemical context and to a specific audience--though the occasion for the analogy is most often, I argue, a political dispute with other intellectuals.

Paying attention to the particular polemical contexts in which they are engaged, I undertake close rhetorical readings of several of the key texts of each of these writers. My focus is on rhetorical complexity, on the tension between the declarative and performative aspects of written works, and on the contradictions that arise as a result of the tendency to both distinguish and compound mental and material activity. My case is enabled and enriched, here, by Anne Janowitz's reading of Romanticism as the literary site for the meeting and contending of communitarian and individualistic vocabularies, values, and versions of identity (1-8, 12). Janowitz's conception of Romanticism provides a framework for talking about the tensions between connection and division, between exemplariness and singularity, tensions that are manifested in the writings of the prose writers I discuss here. For each of these writers, the possession of extraordinary mental prowess--the idea of genius in Romantic aesthetics--is a mark of distinction, signifying originality, individuality and

uniqueness. While all four writers are tempted to play up their own mental exceptionalism, however, they also emphasise their own typicality and ordinariness as labourers when they suggest that intellectual endeavour is undifferentiated from sheer hard graft of other workers. The analogy with manual labour, therefore, is one trope around which the writer's common identity with other populations is asserted in the face of the competing claims of solitary genius and Romantic individuation.⁸

Although this thesis is a work of literary criticism, my thinking has been informed by historical and sociological accounts of intellectuals and intellectual work. In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I wish to clarify the terms and concepts employed in this thesis. I consider, first, the terms "labour" and "mental labour" and explore the development of the analogy linking mental and manual labour in British culture. I then review, insofar as they are relevant to my study, twentieth-century studies of intellectuals. In the course of my discussion, I demonstrate that the analogy with physical labour has been a durable component--a staple, we might say--of intellectuals' self-representations, even though it could be invested with various ideological significations.

I use "work" and "labour" interchangeably because during the Romantic period there was already a great deal of overlap between the two terms. If anything--then, as now--"labour" was somewhat more specific in its connotation of painful, difficult, and even compulsory exertion. Johnson's dictionary suggests this specificity of labour, defining a labourer as someone employed in "coarse and toilsome work." By the

eighteenth century, according to the OED, both terms were used to designate mental as well as bodily toil. Though it sounds commonsensical enough to us, however, there is nothing obvious about the concept of mental labour. In the early middle ages, according to Keith Thomas, "labour" was thought of exclusively as physical labour. In his introduction to *The Oxford Book of Work*, Thomas writes that during the Middle Ages society was perceived as being divided into three orders--the priest, the soldier, and the man who cultivated the soil--of which only the last was thought to labour. The idea of "work" as an "undifferentiated abstraction comprehending an almost infinite variety of different activities" was a later development: "Only gradually," Thomas states, "did the concept of intellectual or mental labour develop" (xiv-xv).⁹ The history of the concept is in some respects the history of the process of its naturalisation, until today, to Jameson's consternation, there has ceased to be anything jarring in the conjunction of "intellectual" and "labour." At the same time, even as the concept becomes more compact, the nebulous nature and counter-intuitive character of mental work keeps surfacing, which is one reason why intellectuals seem vulnerable to critique and why so much of the content of intellectual work is devoted to persuading others that what they do is in fact "real" work.¹⁰

During the eighteenth century there were, in large part as a result of the discourse of political economy, changes in the representational value of "labour" or "work." The virtue attached to labour was inflected, specifically, by an economic argument. As labour came to be valorised as an activity which through the creation of wealth increased national power, it also became a way of securing social esteem.¹¹

Without down-playing too much the changes which occurred then, it should be stressed that the idea that labour was worthy and idleness, by the same token, disgraceful, certainly preceded the eighteenth century. It is possible perhaps to talk about the emergence of a "work ethic," but it is more accurate, though more vague, to refer to a "set of injunctions to work"--religious, moral, economic--which gradually saturated the culture over the course of several centuries (Joyce, *The Historical Meaning of Work* 4, 20; McClelland 184). It is not my purpose to discuss the evolution of the various, often ideologically opposed, discourses which celebrated work, but to trace one register of this high valorisation of work: the desire of non-manual workers to claim for themselves some of the social esteem that attended hard labour.

In the sixteenth century, Thomas Starkey's *Dialogue Between Reginald Pole and Thomas Lupset* (1533-1536) envisioned the nation as a human body and argued that the health of the commonwealth depended upon a just contribution from each part of the body politic. Starkey's aim was to admonish the English nobility, the "head" of the nation, whom he rebuked for their "idul pastymys and vayne," for wasting their time in hunting, eating, and playing cards (52). The nobility, Starkey believed, needed to be reformed and educated so that they could adequately fulfill their role in civic life. All men, chides Pole, Starkey's mouthpiece in the *Dialogue*, have to earn their right to exist:

[Man] is borne to labur and travayle [. . .] and not to lyve as Homer sayth some
dow as an unprofytabel weyght and burden of the erthe, for man is borne to be

as a governour, rular and dylygent tyllar and inhabytant of thys erthe, as some by labur of the body to procure thyngys necessary for the mayntenance of mannys lyfe, some by wysdome and pollycy to kepe the rest of the multytude in gud ordur and cyvylyte, so that non be borne to thys idulness and vanyte, to the wych the most parte of our pepul ys much gyven and bent [. . .] though hyt be so that hyt ys no thyng necessary al to be laburarys and tyllarys of the ground, but some to be prestys and mynysturys of goddys word, some to be gentylmen to the governance of the rest. (53)

That rulers and ruled constitute the head and hands of the political body is a figure that persists into the nineteenth century and is present in the work of Cobbett and Carlyle. Anticipating Carlyle, too, is the criticism of the idle, game-loving aristocracy who consumed the material products of the nation's labourers without rendering anything in return. The equation in Starkey's *Dialogue* of the labours of the rulers with those of the ruled ("rular and dylygant tyllar") is made in order to persuade the aristocracy that they, too, have a duty to perform in leading and guiding the multitude, though the effect is also to legitimate the fundamental division of labour. One doesn't have to make too much of an imaginative leap to see that Carlyle is drawing on this age-worn trope in texts like *Chartism* and *Past and Present*, with his call for a "real working aristocracy" to preside over the nation. Carlyle's demand is provocative in the way that Starkey's is not, of course, because his writings could be read as feeding, through their wide dissemination, more radical agendas.

The text for Starkey's *Dialogue* might have been from the second of Paul's epistles to the Thessalonians--If any man will not work, neither should he eat (2 *Thessalonians*, iii. 10)--an adage that was repeatedly invoked in the nineteenth century both by Malthusian apologists for the New Poor Law, in their attack on the recipients of poor relief, and by radicals like Cobbett in their attacks on the idle aristocracy. If to this biblical injunction is added a second, that of having to eat one's bread by the sweat of one's brow, then non-manual workers must produce at least metaphorical sweat to justify their right to exist. In his commentary on the *Thessalonians*, the sixteenth-century Bishop of Salisbury, John Jewel, acknowledges that Paul's speech was addressed to those "who under the pretence of the gospel lived idly and would not labour," and defends the labours of bishops, preachers, and other guides of the people, princes and learned men: "Now, if we by our labour minister to you the bread which cometh from heaven, is it much that you give us the bread of the earth?" (2: 939, 940). Jewel's justification for the existence of bishops, preachers, and other brainworkers is repeated virtually verbatim by Carlyle in *Sartor Resartus* in his defence of the man of letters. But bread from heaven is not, after all, as essential to human existence as real bread, and Jewel shrewdly anticipates the objections to his metaphor:

But you will say, kings, and counsellors, bishops, preachers, and all sorts of learned men, neither plough nor sow, nor hedge nor ditch, nor use such painful labour of the body: they sit at rest and live idly. They that so think are deceived. The toil which princes take, and the great cares wherewith they are occupied, pass all other cares in the world [. . .]. If a bishop or minister

study the scriptures, preach the gospel, catechize the children and take a care of the souls of God's people; if he sow the Lord's field, feed the Lord's flock, thresh the Lord's corn, [. . .] if he do the work of an evangelist and make his ministry fully known; he shall find himself occupied, and not be idle. (2: 941-2)

Obviously, the claim that the toils and cares of kings and bishops surpass all others is, in Galbraith's term, "unassailable" (261). Jewel is not finished, however; warming to his task, he supports his argument through another analogy, by invoking the metaphor of the ship of state, to which vessel, he claims, the prince, his ministers and counselors are as captains:

The master of the ship seemeth to be idle, to sit still, and to do nothing. He stirreth not the pump, he driveth not the oars, he soundeth not the deep, he rideth not the ropes, he scaleth not the shrouds, he runneth not hither and thither, forward or backward, under the hatches or above, [. . .] in appearance [he] doth nothing. But his labour passeth all the rest. Without his labour, all the pains which the other mariners take were lost. Were it not for his labour, the ship would soon strike upon rocks, and be stayed in the sands, and they all should perish. (Jewel 2: 942)

"In appearance he doth nothing" yet "his labour passeth all the rest": The mental worker's labour is figured as something that looks to the casual observer like idleness, and that only a closer and more discerning view would reveal to be labour after all. The problem is that the brain does not appear to sweat and strain and bend like the body. This unlucky circumstance plagues representations of brain work into the

nineteenth century. In Ford Madox Brown's famous painting, titled simply *Work*, finished in 1863 and exhibited in 1865, Carlyle is depicted in a suit and white collar talking to fellow intellectual, the Christian Socialist Frederick Denison Maurice, and leaning somewhat ostentatiously on a walking-stick (see Figure 1). The two men stand to the right of a group of excavators, watching the physical labourers performing their work. In Brown's own comments on the painting, the excavators, at the centre of the canvas, stand as the "outward and visible type of work," and they are watched by "two men who appear as having nothing to do. These are the brain-workers, who, seeming to be idle, work, and are the cause of well-ordained work and happiness in others" (Hueffer 189-90). Though silent and invisible, and looking for all the world like idleness, brain-work, it is proposed, is no less labourious than the more visible labours of the body.

To be sure, the apparent stillness of mental labour ("he runneth not hither and thither") might be adduced as a unique advantage; the inactivity of the ship's captain, while all about him are engaged in a frenetic activity, could be viewed as steadfastness rather than indolence. It is the master's unmoving position at the hub, so to speak, which allows him to contemplate and command the motions at the circumference. This is essentially the position that Adam Smith assumes in the opening pages of *The Wealth of Nations* when he imagines the division of labour in a pin factory "placed at once under the view of the spectator" (1: 14-15). Coleridge drew on the same trope when he pictured a national Clerisy--the guardians of a nation's learning--as "the points of relative rest" without whom there can be no harmony in any complex community.¹²



1. FORD MADOX BROWN (1821-93): *Work*. 1852-65. Manchester City Art Gallery

What strikes me about Jewel's text, however, is his defensiveness, his attempt to exonerate "kings and counsellors, bishops, preachers, and all sorts of learned men" from the charge of idleness. Some labour with their mind and some with their body; it seems straightforward enough. What troubles Jewel is that mental work could be seen as a mask for idleness. Even when passivity is glorified for the perspective it provides on human affairs, the invisibility of head work is a cause for concern: the analogy with bodily toil tries to make the labour of the mind visible to all.

Starkey and Jewel explain or justify mental labour through an analogy with bodily labour; physical labour came first and is the norm or criterion in relation to which mental labour is defined. By the mid-eighteenth century, the toil of the mind was becoming normalised, could stand alone, and could, therefore, be identified less self-consciously, and with less of a palaver, with the toil of the body. In *A Word to the Wise* (1749), a pamphlet in which he admonishes his fellow Irishmen for their aversion to labour and for their "innate hereditary sloth," George Berkeley recommended the salutary benefits of labour. Without the sense of a countervailing argument which disturbs Jewel, Berkeley briskly identifies the two activities as instances of the same species, labour: "There can be no such thing as a happy life without labour, and [. . .] whoever doth not labour with his hands, must, in his own defence, labour with his brains" (235, 238). Berkeley's maxim yokes the two activities together in the same way as Jewel's "divers sorts of labour, some of the mind and some of the body;" the difference between them is that Berkeley (like Burke in his "sweat of his body or the sweat of his mind") is not moved to elaborate on his identification of the two

activities, suggesting, I think, that by this point in time the notion of "mental labour" had become obvious enough, at least to intellectuals.

While Berkeley, in an antecedent to Carlyle's view of labour as something uniquely fulfilling, claimed that a life without labour was not worth living, other eighteenth-century writers were acknowledging that physical labour was a curse rather than a source of happiness, and that only physical necessity could compel it. Most eighteenth-century commentators on the economy conceded that the labouring classes were responsible for producing the wealth of the nation, but they also believed that to reward them too generously would remove the incentive to produce. This belief was widespread and persistent: Burke, Malthus, and, on occasion, the radical Cobbett concurred with Arthur Young's view that "The lower classes need to be kept poor, or they will never be industrious" (Young 311, 320, 329, 350-56, 361). One way to resolve these two contradictory accounts of labour is to point out--as Marx did in his criticism of Adam Smith in the *Grundrisse*--that the idea that labour was a burden or sacrifice simply naturalises the specific historical forms in which physical labour has been embodied (260-1). In the view of some earlier writers, too, there was no reason why manual labour any more than mental work should necessarily be objectionable. For Gerrard Winstanley, the spokesman for the ultra-radical, seventeenth-century "Diggers," the sorrow was not manual labour--"plowing, digging, and all kinds of manuring"--but its unequal distribution and the element of compulsion. "Bare and simple working in the Earth, according to the freedome of the creation, though it be in the sweat of mans browes, is not the curse," wrote Winstanley: "But for one part of

Mankind to be a Task-master and to live Idle; and by the Beast-like power of the sword, does force another part of Mankind to worke as a servant and a slave, this is the power of the curse, which makes mankind eat his bread in sorrow by the sweat of his browes" (423-4). Essentially the same argument was put forward by Cobbett a century and a half later: honest labour honestly recompensed was no cause for complaint.

The eighteenth-century's economic valorisation of labour was decisively influenced by the discourse of political economy and, in particular, by Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). Smith's treatise elevated the division of labour to an explanatory principle underlying all social and economic life. Though he was not the first to do so, Smith famously treats all labour as a commodity, as something abstract and undifferentiated. According to Smith, therefore, "philosophy or speculation becomes, like every other employment, the principal or sole trade and occupation of a particular class of people" (1: 21). In an ideal commercial society all labourers live by exchanging their products or services with one another, so that every man "becomes in some measure a merchant" (36); the nature of the commodity one brings to the market, then, is irrelevant. Even as he represents labour as a single entity, comprehending the labours of the mind as well as those of the body (100), however, there is a suggestion that Smith thinks of labour primarily as manual labour. Mental labour is considered "labour" only in a derivative sense, and cannot be unambiguously identified with its bodily counterpart. Hence, in his chapter "On the real and nominal price of commodities, or their price in labour, and their price in money," Smith argues

that labour is the "real measure of the exchangeable value of all commodities" (47). The real price of anything, he writes, is the "toil and trouble" of acquiring it; that is, the value of what we pay for in money is the toil and trouble it saves us, and, therefore, what is paid for in money is "purchased by labour as much as what we acquire by the toil of our own body" (47). Toil and trouble correspond to bodily labour, and "real" value is, as it were, the product of real, that is to say physical, toil. In the same way, Smith's tendency to use the metonymy of "hands" to talk about all labourers suggests that he equates productive labour specifically with manual work (332).

The Wealth of Nations appears to codify previous assumptions--hinted at by writers like Starkey and Jewel--that the division of labour is a neutral way of parcelling out the productive tasks of a society, so that activities are distributed to those with special aptitude or talent for them. The notion that different men had different abilities that fitted them for a certain kind of work was widely held; Burke, Cobbett, Hazlitt and Carlyle all believed, at some level, that there was a natural division of society, where those who were innately equipped for intellectual employments ought to govern or guide the activities of those suited only to manual employments. Authority for this view could not be unequivocally obtained from Smith's discussion of the division of labour, however. Although Smith did claim that the division of labour in society originated because the tendency to truck and barter encouraged every man to "apply himself to a particular occupation, and to cultivate and bring to perfection whatever talent or genius he may possess," he also argued, surprisingly, that, on the whole, the

division of labour creates the different talents and "natural" aptitudes rather than following from them: "The difference of natural talents in men is, in reality, much less than we are aware of; and the very different genius which appears to distinguish men of different professions [. . .] is not upon many occasions so much the cause as the effect of the division of labour" (1: 27-9). Even radical writers like Cobbett or Hazlitt were not always careful to make this distinction; they appear, generally, to subscribe to the view that individuals are simply fitted from birth for a certain occupation and a particular social station.

Smith's terms and arguments were frequently appropriated by the writers of the Romantic period, though not always with either fidelity or precision. The discourse on labour was, for example, profoundly affected by the separation, crucial to *The Wealth of Nations*, of productive and unproductive labour. For Smith, productive labour is that labour employed in the production of vendible commodities, and the wealth of a nation is regulated, he says, by the proportion between those who are employed in productive labour and those, unproductive workers or non-workers, who are not so employed (104-5).¹³ Smith does not attach an ethical dimension to this differentiation; he says that the labour of some of the most respectable members of society--some of "the gravest and most important" as well as some of the "most frivolous professions"--is, from the economic point of view, unproductive: "churchmen, lawyers, physicians, men of letters of all kinds" (1: 330-32). Despite Smith's insistence that his categories do not entail a moral discrimination, his equation of "productive" with "useful" labour implies the contrary (11). Certainly his consignment of men of letters to the category

of unproductive labourers could make writers appear socially and economically marginal. Who, after all, would want to be an "unproductive" member of society? At the very least, as Bromell notes, Smith's distinction raises the (for writers) unwelcome questions of what work is and who the workers are (21).

This is not a thesis in economics and it is no part of my intention to defend a particular interpretation of Smith's work. It is important to note, however, that Smith's terminology and ideas had considerable currency, and that writers of opposing political tendencies drew on him as a source of authority. Smith's book is by no means a straightforward apology for commercial capitalism, nor indeed for the division of labour (*Wealth of Nations* 2: 781-5). Although his theories were turned against the labourers by defenders of the free-market like Burke and Malthus, his instinctive sympathies seem to have been with the labourers and his thought was often appropriated by radicals in the nineteenth century to criticise social and economic inequalities (McNally, *Against the Market* 43, 53-5, 59). We should note, too, that when Smith's terms and concepts were adopted they were not always employed with strict adherence to the original meanings. Hence, although Cobbett made use of the productive/ unproductive opposition, he did so for the polemical purpose of distinguishing between those who work and pay taxes and those who live in idleness off those taxes, between the population at large, on one hand, and a corrupt government and its lackeys on the other. The ambiguous way in which Smith's terms were appropriated meant that references to the division of labour or to productive labourers, for example, could crop up in unlikely--and sometimes, as I shall discuss in

chapter four, in seemingly inappropriate--places, such as in Hazlitt's definition of artistic genius.¹⁴

The figures of speech conflating mental and manual labour had, as I have shown, a long history. Although none of the four writers I discuss can quite divest the analogy of the ideological baggage that it entails, namely the attempt to naturalise the fundamental division of labour in society, in the fifty years following the French Revolution, this hackneyed trope was put into the service of other ideological agendas. The analogy was invoked, I argue, to articulate a view about the political role of intellectuals in society. Following 1790, and Burke's incendiary reflections on the French Revolution, the function of the intellectual was debated in British culture, if not for the first time, then for the first time with a clear sense of the ideological stakes which still mark our current cultural discourse about intellectuals and their role in society. While the initial democratic ideals of the French Revolution were soon to be abandoned as practical political goals, they had a lasting impact on political discourse; the entry of the masses into the political arena meant that the acquiescence of the labouring poor could not be taken for granted. Burke's rapid response to events in France--with his emphasis on the material consequences of ideas and his indictment of the activities of the producers of those ideas--made clear that conservative political discourse had to compete, on an ideological battleground, for the allegiance of the labouring population. Intellectual authority, the authority of doctrine, as well as political authority, needed to be based, figuratively at least, in the life of the nation as a whole. In Burke's political economy of the revolution, the assimilation of mental to

physical labour is made in order to claim that his own intellectual endeavour, for example, is more rooted in material life, than the abstract intellectual activity of radical philosophers. In this way, Burke invokes the labouring community at large in support of his own political ideology and denies to the radical theorists the possibility of grounding their speculations in the assumed allegiance of the labourers of, for, and sometimes to whom they claimed to speak. The figures of speech linking mental and manual work become contested terrain, as they had not been prior to 1790, because the analogy was a site for the struggle to define the political ideology of intellectuals, a rhetorical move in a discourse on intellectuals, within a cultural climate where intellectuals were attacked for the abstract, ungrounded, unintegrated nature of their activity. Like Burke, Cobbett, Hazlitt, and Carlyle all draw on the analogy for polemical purposes, even as they adopt it for very different ideological programmes.¹⁵

In this thesis, I focus on the writer as a particular kind of intellectual worker. Occupying a position within the middle strata of society, the writers I discuss here did not derive their income from any of the three sources by which political economists divided society--rent on land, profits on capital, and the wages of labour (Perkin 252-4)--though Hazlitt did work for a time as salaried reporter for a daily paper. I use the terms "intellectual," then, to refer to men who, as Berkeley puts it, "labour with their brains," to men who earn a living--either by selling their products on the market or by offering services to a patron--and who do so in an occupation where mental effort outweighs physical exertion. The category of "the intellectual" is one of the key issues

in modern sociology, and my thinking has been shaped by the writings of sociologists like Pierre Bourdieu, Ron Eyerman, Antonio Gramsci, Alvin Gouldner, and Edward Shils, and of literary/ cultural critics like Edward Said and Raymond Williams, although the evidence of their influence is, in general, confined to the footnotes. I want now to comment on the historical and theoretical literature on the topic of intellectuals; and since sociological studies, for the most part, attempt to set out the conditions for the possibility of the emergence of a particular form of intellectual life rather than trying to pin down a specific date for that emergence, I first address the possible objection that my use of the term "intellectual" is ahistorical or anachronistic when applied to the period 1790-1840.¹⁶

In *Keywords*, Raymond Williams writes that the use of the word "intellectual" as a noun "to indicate a particular kind of person or a person doing a particular kind of work" dates from the early nineteenth century, when, he claims, its implications were the mainly negative ones of coldness and abstraction (140). The most important reason for these associations, as Williams says, was the opposition in British culture, following the French Revolution, to "social and political arguments based on theory or on rational principle" (141). This aversion was connected, in turn, to the Romantic opposition to the separation of reason and emotion. Williams argues, too, that the emergence of the concept of a special category of persons called intellectual was dependent on the growing independence starting in the eighteenth century of some intellectuals from established political and religious institutions (140-42). While I agree

in broad terms with Williams' account, I want to expand on his necessarily compressed discussion.¹⁷

Williams' version of the history of the emergence of intellectuals has been challenged by T. W. Heyck, who argues that Williams' dates are too early. "In the early and mid-Victorian periods (1830-70)," writes Heyck, "the English did not think of their society as having a separate, distinct class of people known as intellectuals" (9, 16). According to Heyck, neither the concept nor the term intellectual in any of the modern senses of the term existed until the middle of the century and probably not until the later Victorian period (1870-1900). Twentieth-century sociological definitions of the intellectual are therefore anachronistic when applied to pre-1870 society: "one should [. . .] attempt [. . .] to see how the Victorians thought about themselves and their intellectual needs" (14-15). It is only the emergence of the idea and the vocabulary of intellectuals during the Victorian period, Heyck argues, that "have made it possible for modern sociologists to think of all societies [. . .] as having intellectuals" (15). He is quite severe in his censure of Perry Anderson, Tom Nairn, and E. P. Thompson, for "the heavy-handedness of their generalizations and the casualness of their usage of terms like 'the intellectuals' and 'an intelligentsia'" (19).

Despite his avowedly historical orientation, Heyck's evidence is largely confined to the absence of the term intellectual in nineteenth-century dictionaries and encyclopedias. There may be something to be said for relying solely on the terms and concepts that an earlier period might have deployed to describe itself, but Heyck's out-and-out rejection of the analytic category of "intellectual" may prevent him from

identifying evidence, in earlier periods, of processes and phenomena that bear some resemblance to the idea of intellectuals so-called. One point of attempting the theoretical definition of any historical phenomenon, I take it, is to help to make explicit concepts and distinctions that writers in earlier periods would perhaps have felt without being able to fully articulate. Doing away with the term "intellectual" to talk about the period would be like dispensing with the term "class" or any of the other analytic categories that enable us to make intelligible earlier processes and events. I don't think, in sum, that Heyck proves that the concept, as opposed to the term, "intellectual" was absent in the early nineteenth century; contrary to Heyck's claim, sociological theory and the history of ideas suggest an earlier appearance of the notion of intellectual.

There is a further, more serious criticism to make of Heyck. The transformation in the intellectual life of the nation, which Heyck meticulously charts, produces as its outcome the "doctrine of a separate class of learned men, shielded from the public by means of endowment but claiming the authority of priests of true knowledge and correct thinking" (217). For Heyck, intellectuals are defined by their "aloofness," "elevation," and "detachment" from ordinary life (217). The image of the intellectual as a detached and contemplative observer is based on an aristocratic model of intellectual activity, as we shall see, and whether the ideal is embodied in Coleridge's clerisy, in the aestheticism of artists, or in the professionalisation of academic scientists, the type is a persistent one in representations of intellectuals. While the ideal of separateness is certainly an alluring one, and one which each of the

four authors I discuss is occasionally attracted to, in my view this is too rarefied an ideal of what the intellectual is. Burke, Hazlitt, Cobbett, and Carlyle do not maintain the contemplative stance for long and, indeed, the use of the analogy with manual labour is partly meant to abolish the charge of detachment. To a large extent, then, we all construct our object of study; if Heyck is looking for a prototype of the intellectual that he has already defined as aloof and exalted above the public, he is unlikely to find that type embodied in the activity of the four combative polemicists I study here.

It is important to stress that the formation of the idea of the intellectual was not a single event but a process, commencing in all likelihood with Voltaire and then consolidating around the final three decades of the nineteenth century with the formation of "a distinct class of people."¹⁸ The conditions for the possibility of the concept had arisen during the Renaissance; both Gouldner and Bourdieu emphasise the importance of secularisation, the breakdown of the old feudal system of aristocratic and ecclesiastical patronage, and the growth of an anonymous exchange-market for cultural goods as conditions necessary for the emergence of a class of cultural producers, formally autonomous in being dependent on the market for their income (Gouldner 1-2; Bourdieu, "The Market of Symbolic Goods" 14-15). As I shall make clear in chapter two, Burke's interpretation of the French Revolution is fully cognisant of the process which these sociologists describe. Here is Burke, for example, in a famous passage from the *Reflections*, warning of the dangers of learned and enterprising men freed from the tutelage of church and state:

The nobility and the clergy, the one by profession, the other by patronage, kept learning in existence [. . .]. Learning paid back what it received to nobility and to priesthood; and paid it back with usury, by enlarging their ideas and by furnishing their minds. Happy if they had all continued to know their indissoluble union, and their proper place! Happy if learning, not debauched by ambition, had been satisfied to continue the instructor, and not aspired to be the master! Along with its natural protectors and guardians, learning will be cast into the mire, and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude.

(Writings and Speeches 8: 130)

In virtually all his texts in the 1790s, Burke emphasizes the critical role of ambitious, newly-politicised men of letters, calling to mind Habermas' account of the emergence of a political public out of an earlier literary public sphere, an occurrence that Habermas dates earlier in Britain than in France or Germany (*Structural Transformation* 27-43, 57-73). Burke does not use the term "intellectual," but it is surely no anachronism to employ Bourdieu's terminology to elucidate Burke's reasoning.

It is common to divide the different theories for thinking about intellectuals into three over-arching traditions: 1) the notion of the intellectual as a protector of cultural standards; 2) the idea of the intellectual as a political dissident; and 3) the idea of the intellectual as a determinate place on the social division of labour.¹⁹ Although they are worth separating for analytical purposes, in practice, most theories of intellectuals contain aspects of all of these traditions. The last describes the

institutional position or occupational role of the intellectual rather than being a mission statement of his or her social function. It is this third group of theories which underlies structural or sociological definitions of intellectuals such as Bourdieu's or Gouldner's. As I have already suggested, while these theories originate in the twentieth-century, many of the terms they supply, such as Bourdieu's idea of cultural capital, might profitably be adapted to explicate the discourse on intellectuals in the early nineteenth century.

It is the potential for conflict between the first two theories that is most relevant to this thesis, however. The first of these notions refers to what is sometimes termed the doctrine of the "defenders of the faith." In its broadest sense, this idea of the intellectual as a preserver or depository of cultural values can be taken to refer to a phenomenon that is supra-historical, since its archetype is the religious priest. In the twentieth century this sense of the intellectual as a defender of traditional or transcendental standards has been closely associated with Julien Benda and his accusation that intellectuals had betrayed their calling: the treason of intellectuals ("*la trahison des clercs*"). Benda's view was that intellectuals--*clercs* or clerics--were a small group of intellectually endowed, morally courageous, and materially disinterested men who acted as a society's conscience by upholding eternal standards of truth and justice. He defines the clerics in opposition to the lay-people: "All those whose activity essentially is not the pursuit of practical aims, all those who seek their joy in the practice of an art or a science or metaphysical speculation, in short in the possession of non-material advantages" (30). Intellectuals constitute an effective

clerisy for Benda, defending the fundamental values of their civilisation. The "treason" of intellectuals, at the end of the nineteenth century, was their abandonment of non-material and non-immediate aims (God, Art, Knowledge) in order to take a practical interest in secular affairs. In so doing they had added their voices to the political hatreds between nations and classes, which, if they had always been powerless to prevent, they had at least refused to dignify with thought (30-1). The second of the traditions for thinking about intellectuals is the one which has most influenced twentieth-century ideas about the special political responsibility of intellectuals as a dissenting elite opposed to power. Jean Paul Sartre and Edward Said, for example, are two writers who can be said both to theorise and to enact this role. The notion derives most obviously from the oppositional cultures of the Russian intelligentsia and the French Dreyfusards of the late nineteenth century. Again, though, the idea of the intellectual as dissenter has its provenance in the previous century; Jerzy Szacki and Zygmunt Bauman point out that the prototype of the political intellectual is the French *philosophe* of the eighteenth century, and Said himself mentions Voltaire as an early example of an individual who "spoke the truth to power" (Szacki 235; Bauman 21-37; Said 7-8).

The discord between the idea of the intellectual as cultural conserver and the idea of the intellectual as political dissenter is relevant to an understanding of cultural conflict in the period 1790-1840, for it can be argued that, in the British context, an open ideological conflict about the role of the intellectual-writer is apparent for the first time during this period. Historians and literary scholars, less fastidious than Heyck

about the use of anachronisms, have drawn on these theories to argue that Burke's indictment of intellectuals was a perception of the conflict between the literary-cultural and political responsibilities of public intellectuals. J. G. A Pocock, for instance, has urged that Burke interprets the revolution as a betrayal of the intellectuals (207). Burke, claims Pocock, found the causes of the Revolution in the machinations of the *gens de lettres* and *philosophes*, in the activities of an "organised and unpatronised intelligentsia" (Pocock 198, 203-7). The Revolution, for Burke, was a distant effect of a process in which the religious priest is supplanted by the political dissenter. Burke, Pocock argues, by tracing the Revolution to secular ambitions of a class of educated men who had previously been tied to the aristocracy or the church, anticipated Benda's later version of the treason of intellectuals. Benda criticised intellectuals for betraying their calling in their praise of the practical and for inflaming political passion by doctrine; a century earlier, in a similar but not identical indictment, Burke accused men of letters of taking political ideas to the marketplace and adding physical force to doctrinal disputes. The French Revolution was, Burke said, an "armed doctrine" (*Writings and Speeches* 9: 199).

In *The Idea of the Clerisy in the Nineteenth Century*, Ben Knights suggests that the response to the French Revolution initiated a debate in Britain on the role of the intellectual. Coleridge's idea of the clerisy, he argues, emerged in the wake of the French Revolution in response to the perception that the excesses of reason and rationalism of eighteenth-century theorists led to the Revolution: "The Revolution had attracted attention to the social activities of intellectuals, since it was already a

commonplace that they had played a substantial part in bringing it about" (4, 39).

Coleridge appears to be refining Burke's view of the revolutionary impact of the emancipation of learning when he speaks ominously of "three silent revolutions" that had occurred in England: "1. When the Professions fell off from the Church. 2. When Literature fell off from the Professions. 3. When the Press fell off from Literature" (*Collected Works* 14, *Table Talk* 1: 285). Both Burke and Coleridge see a falling off of the clerical function of men of letters, and try to re-affirm the proper cultural role of the intellectual. The clerisy then, as Knights makes clear, developed as an ideology for intellectuals, articulating an ideal role for the educated individual in relation to society and dispelling the idea that intellectuals were somehow opposed in their interests to the best interests of society as a whole (7). Similarly, Jeffrey Cox contends that we witness, in the vehement polemical disputes among the factions of the literary republic in the immediate wake of the Napoleonic wars, "a battle to shape the ideology of what we would call the intelligentsia and which Coleridge called the clerisy" (57). I would add only that the first salvo in this battle is fired by Burke in 1790.²⁰

I repeat that I am not, in this thesis, making a claim about the date of the creation of the modern intellectual, nor claiming that such a case could be adequately demonstrated. The idea of the intellectual arose slowly over the course of perhaps two centuries. I suggest that what we observe in the Romantic period is the emergence of a recognisable *discourse about* intellectuals, a certain mode of representation and self-representation provoked by a particular kind of criticism. That is, I am less concerned to show that the late twentieth-century intellectual has his or her origin in the

Romantic period than to suggest the endurance of strategies of representation. If there is one claim on which I want to rest the significance of this thesis, it is that the urge to affirm the materiality of their own work and the desire to assert a solidarity with the wider labouring population persists as an imperative in intellectuals' self-representations. For these reasons intellectuals have continued to draw on the rhetoric of labour in their representations of their own activity.

Irena Grudzinska Gross has advanced a different thesis regarding the formation of the modern intellectual in the wake of the French Revolution. In a fascinating study of Alexis de Tocqueville and Alphonse de Custine, Gross argues that the displaced noblemen of the Revolution transformed themselves into intellectuals, an aristocracy of spirit rather than of birth. Threatened with extinction, or at the very least irrelevance, and "socially isolated" in their own country, they travelled abroad, and while remaining outside--physically or metaphorically--the land and the culture of their origin, they managed to turn that position into a vantage point by showing that only the view from outside can illuminate a society. In the way Custine and Tocqueville shaped a viable public role, she alleges, we can observe "the creation of modern intellectuals, and the process through which they carved out for themselves a place in their own society" (Gross xiii, 5, 167-8). Gross' thesis will enable me restate my own argument and also help me to make clear the particularity of the British historical experience.

In a lecture addressed to a Japanese audience, Sartre claimed that attacks on intellectuals who had abandoned their culturally conservative for a critical and negative identity are "everywhere more or less the same" (228). He described the keynote of

these criticisms as an attack on the dogmatic and abstract point of view: intellectuals question "received truths and accepted behaviour" by invoking intangible but universal ideals as arbitrary principles for judgment (229-30). It is this characterisation of intellectual activity as abstract and intangible which underlies the reproach that the intellectual's political intervention is an attempt to interfere in a domain beyond his or her field of competence (230). Sartre's claim that this criticism of the intellectual is global and trans-historical would be difficult to substantiate; nevertheless, there does seem to be an element of truth in this generalisation. In a darkly comic passage, Milan Kundera notes the efficacy of such a line of criticism in post-war communist Czechoslovakia. Kundera recalls that in the political jargon of the 1950s, the term "intellectual" was used as an insult:

It indicated someone who did not understand life and was cut off from the people. All the Communists who were hanged at the time by other Communists were awarded such abuse. Unlike those who had their feet solidly on the ground, they were said to float in the air. So it was only fair, in a way, that as punishment the ground was permanently pulled out from under their feet, that they remained suspended a little above the floor. (6-7)

As Sartre contends, the accusation made against intellectuals, especially leftist intellectuals, that they are concerned with mere abstractions rather than real life, that they are unconnected to material issues and actual people, and that they are detached from the lived existence of the community is a familiar one. My contention is that we can identify a specific articulation of this discourse in early-nineteenth-century Britain.

Burke's distinction between mere theory and the practical knowledge of the experienced politician is possibly the earliest culturally-significant articulation of this charge against intellectuals. The period from 1789 to 1832 was, at the very least a significant moment in the construction of the "intellectual as an enemy."²¹

By claiming that his own intellectual practice is more embedded in the actual life experience of the people than that of radical thinkers, Burke aims to make radical discourse ineffectual. Burke's use of the analogy with physical work to describe his own mental efforts is aimed at pulling the ground from under his radical adversaries, to leave them "suspended," in Kundera's phrase, by denying them the possibility of forging a connection to the labouring poor. The trope linking mental to manual work was claimed, by radical writers such as Cobbett and Hazlitt, not because they wanted to contribute to the ideological deception of manual labourers, but because the analogy became an important rhetorical site in the battle to define the responsibility of intellectuals. Their assimilation of their own work to that of other labourers, I argue, is precisely meant to deny the airy disconnectedness attributed to intellectuals by Burke. Hence, as I shall detail in chapter four, when Hazlitt attacks the social and geographical detachment of his radical allies, Shelley and Byron, he does so to dispute the view that the intellectual can be a distant observer of his own society. Pace Grudzinska Gross, detachment or outsideness was not a situation that any of the writers discussed here would have considered an advantage. In the British context, the idea of the intellectual owes as much to a combat between "middle-class," working writers as to the self-fashioning of displaced aristocrats, and as much to the insistence

on a lived relationship to the ordinary labouring population as to the valorisation of the view from outside.²²

It is not surprising that Burke's successful strategy--of attacking intellectuals for the abstract and impalpable quality of their activity--should have been repeated by reactionary forces since. Nor is it surprising that progressive intellectuals have, following the example of Cobbett and Hazlitt, tried to repossess the analogy for its "proper" use, and to give back to radical thought the political purchase to be gained from the sense of a shared labouring identity with the mass of people. In clause four of the constitution of the Labour Party (1918), for example, the now defunct clause which committed the party to the implementation of socialist goals, Sidney Webb wrote of the need "to secure for the producers by hand or by brain the full fruits of their industry, and the most equitable distribution thereof that may be possible, upon the basis of common ownership of the means of production and the best obtainable system of popular administration and control." While the document was designed to appeal to a post-war radical sentiment in the party, the evasiveness over the issue of control, it has been widely recognised, reflected Webb's distaste for workers' control in all its forms. What we might term the ideological ambiguity of clause four is compounded by Webb's apparently untroubled conjoining of mental and manual labour in the phrase "producers by hand or by brain." Webb brilliantly constructs a rhetorical solidarity between the Labour party's constituents of manual workers and left intellectuals, but he also seems to acknowledge that a division of labour--between management and workers, say--would survive the implementation of socialism.

Indeed, Webb's authorship of the document, in which he encoded his particular political preferences, performs the division of labour--I'll tell you what to do and you do it--whose significance the careful phrasing partially elides. As I show in chapter three, the same problem of how to create a solidarity of mental and manual workers troubled Cobbett's "Address to the Journeymen and Labourers." And when Raymond Williams, in pointing out the limitations of Cobbett's radicalism, comments that Cobbett's assertion of the permanence of the division of labour creates a specific relationship with his audience, it is the kind of political relationship instanced by Webb's document that he is criticising (*Cobbett* 17).

Today's humanist intellectuals lodged in the modern University are hardly likely to be as unreflectively optimistic as Webb about the identity of class interests. It is not to be expected, either, that academics would resort to the analogy with physical work in order to stress the value of what they do. It is possible, nevertheless, to detect in the widespread acceptance of the criterion of "productivity," for instance, a wish to endow "intellectual production" with a more than metaphoric significance.²³ In addition, the claim to speak for, and to otherwise represent, larger communities outside the academy continues as a way of shoring up and substantiating intellectual practices. The imperative persists, as Jameson in *The Political Unconscious* was quick to notice, to ground mental activity in more immediately recognisable kinds of labour, and by positing a connection to a population outside the intellectual community. The point cannot be reaffirmed too often that intellectuals are constantly evoking the labouring population to position themselves against other intellectuals. From this

perspective, indeed, we might venture that Jameson's own maneuver in *The Political Unconscious*, of chastising the intellectual practice of others by invoking the assembly line worker, is not so different from the ruse he criticises, a point I will return to at the end of chapter five and in my "Afterword."²⁴ To illuminate these points I will look in detail at one of the most challenging accounts of intellectuals and intellectual representations to have been published in recent years: Edward Said's *Representations of the Intellectual*. Said has been a theoretical touchstone for my thinking about intellectual representations of the Romantic period, but I want to suggest the ways in which his account is, at the same time, implicated in the terms of debate of that period. Throughout his book, I will show, Said deploys the rhetoric of labour in order to differentiate his own intellectual practice from those of his political opponents.

The title of Said's book, *Representations of the Intellectual*, is deliberately ambiguous. On one hand, as Said succinctly puts it, "intellectual representations are the activity itself" (20). The salient feature of Said's definition is that:

[T]he intellectual is an individual endowed with a faculty for representing, embodying, articulating a message, a view, an attitude, philosophy or opinion to, as well as for, a public, [. . .] it is the intellectual as a representative figure that matters--someone who visibly represents a standpoint of some kind, and someone who makes articulate representations to his or her public despite all sorts of barriers, [. . .] intellectuals are individuals with a vocation for the art of representing. (11-13)

The book is also about the way in which intellectuals are represented by other intellectuals and by themselves. In representing something, intellectuals also "represent themselves to themselves," and they do what they do according to this idea they have of themselves (xv). Intellectuals' representations are always self-representations, or a stance on the proper role of intellectuals in society. *Representations of the Intellectual*, then, represents the possibility of politically engaged and oppositional intellectual activity and suggests that one danger of a purely functionalist definition of intellectuals is that the representation is, in a sense, self-fulfilling.

Said's is, on one hand, a stout defence of Benda's romantic idea of intellectuals as gifted "thoroughgoing individuals" against more inclusive, functionalist definitions of the intellectual (7). Said contends that the greatest threat to intellectual responsibility, as he imagines it, is not mass society, but professionalism, the possibility that all intellectuals might be reduced to mere technicians working for the media, for political bureaucracies, or for massive corporations. While he "takes for granted" the late twentieth-century realities described by Gramsci, his intent is to prevent the "real," heroic intellectual from being crowded out, both conceptually and in fact, by the inclusive definition according to which almost any non-manual worker--"anonymous functionaries and careful bureaucrats"--can claim to be an intellectual (8, 11, 13). Said is careful, however, that his definition of the intellectual does not tip over into Coleridge's clerisy, as Benda's non-secular and very conservative definition does, for he adds the important proviso that only those individuals who go against the prevailing social norms and who side with the weak and oppressed are intellectuals properly

speaking (x, 22-3, 36). In effect, Said is melding two opposed ideas of the intellectual role, Benda's exceptional, altruistic, non-partisan individual and the idea of the intellectual as political dissident, a conjoining which allows him to refute in advance the charge that his own political interventions are in any way ideological. Hence, by reiterating the importance of secularism he means not merely that true intellectuals are unconstrained by religious orthodoxy, but also that they remain attached to universal principles rather than to a party line or to professional methods: "for the true secular intellectual" there are "no gods to be worshipped and looked to for unwavering guidance" (xiv, 113-20). The critical factors in Said's definition, then, are the faculty of representation, secularism, the opposition to power, and an inveterate individualism. The intellectual is, in a nice phrase: "the author of a language that tries to speak the truth to power" (xvi).

This is also a self-justification, of course. Said's representation of the intellectual is a representation of what he considers to be legitimate intellectual activity, and the historical figures he discusses are those on whom he models his own intellectual practice. These figures are, for the greater part, twentieth-century figures like Sartre, Adorno, Césaire, and Chomsky, although he does mention Voltaire. Said neglects to discuss the debate on the French Revolution and does not talk about any of the intellectuals of this period, apart from a passing aside on Tom Paine (20). This is surprising, for what has made Said's intervention in the contemporary debate on intellectuals within Anglo-American culture a useful theoretical perspective for my thesis is that his view seems decisively influenced by the ideas and literary

representations of the Romantic period. It could be contended that writers like Paine and William Godwin, as well as Cobbett and Hazlitt, were defining the intellectual as a secular and principled individual, and that these writers are precursors of Said's model of the intellectual. Indeed, as I shall suggest in chapter four, Said's thinking seems to me to stand squarely in the tradition of which Hazlitt is an important forerunner, both as theorist and practitioner. Said's attack on the "aesthetics of recantation," for example, leveled, in particular, at fellow-travelers who had abandoned their principles at the collapse of the former communist regimes in the late 1980s and early 1990s (xii-xiii, 110-14), could have been written by Hazlitt or Cobbett as they viewed with dismay the desertion of former allies from the cause of liberty.

The description of the "true" intellectual as a "thoroughgoing" and secular individual in permanent opposition would have been intelligible to Cobbett and Hazlitt. Although Hazlitt has been criticised for the way in which his liberal individualism compromises his democratic political sentiments, it is important to note that it is the same tradition of intellectual practice that is being valorised by Said. I argue in chapter four that Hazlitt uses the analogy with manual labour in part to intimate a rhetorical alliance between the isolated writer and other artisanal workers. What I want to propose now is that Said's own representation of the intellectual draws on the same rhetoric, placing his discourse within the tradition discussed here. Although Said is too careful a rhetorician to assimilate the intellectual's activity to physical work--not for him "the sweat of the mind"--this strategy of representation persists in his writings in a more subtle form.

The whole point of the intellectual vocation, in Said's terms, is the maintenance of a constant "critical sense, a sense of being unwilling to accept easy formulas, or ready-made clichés, or the smooth, ever-so-accommodating confirmation of what the powerful or conventional have to say" (23). The intellectual vocation, Said remarks, demands "a stance of constant alertness, of a perpetual willingness not to let half-truths or received ideas steer one along, [. . .] this involves a steady realism, an almost athletic rational energy" (23). The same opposition, between easy acquiescence and the athletic and energetic intellect, is again employed in order to validate the global ideals of Said's enlightenment intellectual, his or her commitment to universal principles of freedom and justice. Universality means not having access to the "easy certainties provided us by our background, language, nationality, which so often shield us from the reality of others;" under these conditions, he says, "the social terrain is not only diverse, but very difficult to negotiate" (xiv). Difficulty is opposed to ease in order to distinguish between the political stances of intellectuals. Further, Said's representations of the intellectual are materialised by a connection to the voiceless and unrepresented: they are "always tied to and ought to remain part of an ongoing experience in society" (113). It is through such connections that the intellectual is able to articulate universal standards even in a post-modern world: "Yes, you have conviction and you make judgment, but they are arrived at by *work*, and by a sense of association with others, other intellectuals, a grassroots movement, a continuing history, a set of lived lives" (emphasis added) (120). "Work" is here aimed not just at careerist professionals and apostate radicals, but also at those post-modern

intellectuals of the pseudo-left who, having given up all false gods, have relinquished the hope of ever articulating meaningful standards. Those who prize "competence, not universal values like truth or freedom," have also made their peace with the powers: "Lyotard and his followers are admitting their own *lazy* incapacities, perhaps even indifference, rather than giving a correct assessment of what remains for the intellectual a truly vast array of opportunities despite post-modernism" (emphasis added) (18). Said's genuine intellectual is hemmed in on all sides, by the pressures of co-optation on the right and by cynical indifference on the left. The terms he uses to distinguish "real" intellectual work--difficulty, struggle and athletic energy versus the easy acceptance by the lazy mind--are much the same terms that writers like Cobbett and Hazlitt drew on both to differentiate themselves from time-serving intellectuals, such as government placemen and pensioned writers, who had been corrupted by the attractions of an easy existence, and to moor their own practice in a solidarity with other workers.

It is necessary to recall, however, that the same rhetoric was adopted by Burke when he castigated radical intellectuals who, espousing universal principles, ignored the nitty-gritty of lived existence. For what intellectual, after all, would confess to being lazy, to avoiding difficulty, to being unconnected to the lives of the populace? While it is not at all my purpose to criticise Said's powerfully articulated view of the possibility of oppositional intellectual activity, I am struck by the terms in which he defends one kind of intellectual vocation or political stance or ideological performance over others: through the opposition of work to laziness, difficulty to ease. He does not

explicitly make the analogy between his own labour and that of manual workers, but he does try to make his own activity of representing concrete, as it were, by establishing a relationship with the unrepresented and voiceless. The rhetoric of "work" is bolstered by claiming a connection with those who really do labour, rather than merely think or represent things. And, at the same time, there is an imputation that those who can claim the value of labour for themselves are justified in democratically aligning themselves with the oppressed populations on whom the world's work falls.

The four intellectuals whom I discuss here are all male prose writers and, before offering a summary of each chapter, I will say a word in explanation of my selection. In his recent book on Romanticism and masculinity in which he treats three of the writers investigated here--Burke, Cobbett, and Hazlitt--Tim Fulford argues that the Romantics were "seeking to revise the versions of masculinity that were powerful in the state," versions that were modeled on the sublime masculinity that Burke recommended as necessary to secure the state through fear and domination (16, 12-13). Fulford claims that these representations of masculinity occurred in a period (1790-1832) in which traditional aristocratic versions of "authority and gender had been discredited without being successfully replaced" (9). It is possible to argue that one way in which responsible and independent middle-class masculinity came to be defined, and its moral superiority to the aristocracy affirmed, in the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries was through employment, occupation, and industry.²⁵ For

the male writer, perhaps made effete, rather than manly, by purely intellectual employment, there might be still more compelling reasons for insinuating his resemblance to a sturdy physical labourer (Bromell 17). But the argument that these authors asserted their manliness by equating writing and manual worker requires care, for constructing masculinity through association with the labouring classes was potentially an unreliable strategy. During this period, the labouring classes were in a sense becoming emasculated, as Cobbett and Carlyle realised, by poverty, by dependence on wage labour and on relief, and by discourses like Malthus' which threatened to withhold from labourers the very basic rights of reproducing their kind.

I analyse prose writers rather than poets because I am interested in writing that is directly interventionist, writing which makes no bones about its status as polemic. All four writers seem to me be primarily engaged in attacking their intellectual opponents, however their antagonists are defined. Obviously these authors are writing at different moments and are engaged in different polemical conflicts; this enables me to claim the continuity of the assimilation to physical labour as a form of intellectual self-representation. It seems significant, too, that all four writers make their living from their writing, for what motivates their use of the analogy with manual labour, in part, is the sense that under certain conditions writing and thinking are as arduous as any other kind of labour. Burke's attack on Charles Fox, on the Pitt government, and on the Duke of Bedford, Cobbett's censure of the pensioned press, Hazlitt's criticism of Shelley and Byron, all arise from a sensitivity to the privileges enjoyed by some intellectuals, either from birth or from political favour.

Finally, and most importantly, in order to explore intellectuals' self-representations, I did not want to look, primarily, at theories that conceptualise intellectuals and their activities. If this had been my intention, it would have been important to discuss Coleridge's idea of the clerisy in more detail, for as Knights and Prickett have chronicled, Coleridge's doctrine of an endowed learned class was influential for nineteenth-century intellectuals; his ideas certainly had an effect on Carlyle and Mill, both of whom I discuss in chapter five. Rather than looking at theories of intellectual practice, however, I am interested in observing the practice itself, the practice, that is, of the activity of representing. In other words, I want to look at how these authors' view of the intellectual's role is embodied in representational performance, in the rhetorical figures by which they represent themselves to themselves and to their audiences.

In chapter two, I re-examine an important and persistent issue in the secondary literature on Burke: the ambiguity of his political affiliation. Although he appears as the defender of the old aristocratic order and the propertied classes, he also defines himself as the champion of the interests of unpropertied but upwardly mobile men of talent and ability, of which he himself was a representative. My aim is not to resolve this tension but to refocus it; I concentrate my analysis, therefore, on Burke's representation of his own "labours," which he places within two, potentially competing, models for viewing the work of thinking and writing. These two paradigms draw respectively on the discourses of political economy and civic humanism, which roughly correspond to the political ideologies of the two different socio-economic

groups whose interests Burke wants to reconcile, the bourgeoisie and the landed aristocracy. Burke the political economist comprehends his work as a labour as arduous as any other, and resorts to the analogy with physical work. He also wants to locate his thinking within an earlier, aristocratic tradition, however, which sees political thought as the preserve of a natural aristocracy who have the leisure to contemplate and reflect.²⁶

Although Burke's rhetorical virtuosity often succeeds in containing these contrasting ideological projects, their contradictions come out into the open when he appropriates the analogy of mental and manual labour in order to attack his radical opponents: to differentiate his own thinking and writing from the airy, abstract, immaterial thinking of revolutionary philosophers in France and of reformers at home (variously referred to as theorists, men of letters, speculators, and metaphysicians). The problem with this strategy is that his use of the analogy to emphasise his own unremitting labours aligns him with the leveling impulse he is attacking and severs him from the aristocratic community he claims to defend. As I have already suggested, Burke's attempt to cut the ground from under radical intellectuals by depriving them of the ballast of an alliance with other labourers has been a conventional reactionary stratagem. My chapter suggests that if this attack has been effective, it is, nonetheless, rhetorically unstable.

In chapter three, I show how Cobbett, responding to Burke's problematic use of the analogy, yokes intellectual to manual labourers in order to construct a rhetorical solidarity of different categories of productive workers against an unproductive and

idle ruling class. His identification of himself as a productive worker, akin to labourers and journeymen, is supported by his criticism of government "hirelings" like Burke and Southey, who, he contends, sold their talents and their political principles for a pension. At the same time as he asserts his identity with the labourers and journeymen, Cobbett studiously avoids Burke's easy assimilation of the bodily pains of labour by insisting on the metaphorical basis of his own identification. In his defence of the rights of labourers, for instance, Cobbett puts forth the Lockean view that labour on the land is the original basis of all property. Those who work with their minds can have a right of ownership, too, through money given in exchange, but this turns out to be a poor derivative of the original right: "The foundation of their property is labour as completely *as if* they had first broken up the earth, subdued it, and made it fruitful by the labour of their bodies" (emphasis added) (*A Legacy to Labourers* 46-9).

Cobbett's project in his political writings after 1816 is to diminish the distance opened up by that "as if," by maintaining that his political writings--as opposed to the writings of the corrupt press--return, indirectly, to fructify the land by helping to reduce the oppression and exploitation of rural labourers.²⁷

I demonstrate, in chapter four, that the replication of the mental/ manual distinction in the field of letters allows Hazlitt to distinguish between the real work done by those who have to write in order to make a living and the dilettante activity of the gentleman scholar. Hazlitt presents himself as a hack writer who has to earn his bread by the sweat of his brow, in order to criticise aristocratic privilege as it is manifested in the cultural sphere. The main use of the analogy with physical activity in

Hazlitt's work is to articulate distinctions in the field of letters, and, whereas for the other writers discussed here, cultural conflicts are refracted through the discourse on the labouring poor, for Hazlitt, sympathy for the poor appears only obliquely through his attack on "the learned." Nevertheless, the frequency of the analogy with manual labour in Hazlitt's writings obliges the reader to consider the implications of his attempt to ally the writer rhetorically with other labourers. For Hazlitt, confusingly, the notion of an "aristocracy of letters" is both a positive phenomenon, signifying, through the concept of genius, transcendental powers of mind, and a negative one, which describes the way social distinctions are reproduced and reinforced in the literary-artistic domain. While he is often taken to be a straightforward apologist for a characteristically Romantic and idealist view of artistic creation, Hazlitt's curious and repeated borrowing of Smith's concept of the division of labour to explain his notion of "genius" evinces his ambivalence about his favourite critical idea. The image of the labouring writer is crucial to Hazlitt's self-understanding, and suggests that, for him, the intellectual was not part of an elite but embedded within a population of ordinary workers.²⁸

Chapter five argues that in the 1830s Carlyle deployed the analogy of mental and manual labour to berate an idle ruling class for eschewing the noble work of guidance, and to incite the secular and spiritual aristocracy to be equal to the task of presiding over an industrious and loyal people. The metaphor suggests that in a healthy polity a relationship of reciprocal labours between governors and governed ought to prevail. What is remarkable about Carlyle's conjoining of mental and physical labours

is that in his hands the analogy changes from being a medium for a radical critique to being a vehicle for a reactionary agenda. Throughout the 'thirties, as the work of guidance is imaged through the analogy with physical labour, Carlyle forgets the metaphorical status of his assimilation of mental and manual labour, and he begins to imagine the labouring classes as raw material to be fashioned. In his problematic employment of the analogy Carlyle, I argue, draws attention to the constitutive force of intellectuals' self-representations. What begins as an attack on the ruling classes and a demand for effective government ends, as the exhortation to "work" is redirected from the ruling class to the manual labourers, as an argument for physical coercion.²⁹

John Stuart Mill responded to Carlyle's flamboyant and provocative assimilation of mental to manual labour by asserting the fundamental difference between mental and manual occupations. If Carlyle dramatises the conflicting ideological valences of the analogy between intellectual and physical labour, Mill's reply to Carlyle in 1850 highlights the problem of alluding to real (manual) work in the elaboration of intellectual conflicts, an issue I briefly take up in the "Afterword."

Notes

¹ One aspect of the sympathy for ordinary workers was, to be sure, the compassion felt by guardians for their wards (Bauman 78). Nevertheless, in a period when social revolution seemed a real possibility, each of these writers, even Burke, committed himself, on occasion, to a political solidarity with the labouring poor.

² The long-term changes in economic and social life between 1650 and 1850 have been amply documented: urbanisation, industrialisation, secularisation, the rational organisation of the work-place, the progressive division of labour, the application of science and technology to agriculture and manufacturing. Between about 1780 and 1832, workers of all kinds experienced the erosion of their independence and their reduction to "the status of an 'instrument'" (E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* 202-3). On the transformation of working life by the triumph of the free market for labour, see Polanyi, E. P. Thompson, "Time, Work-Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism" and McNally, *Against the Market* (30-42).

³ The suspicion with which intellectuals and their activities have traditionally been treated in some schools of Marxist thought may be attributed, in part, to the fact that mental workers have always seemed anomalous in a movement founded on the self-emancipation of the labouring class and dedicated to the eradication of, among

other discriminations, the distinction between mental and manual work. Marx himself did not formulate a theory of intellectuals.

⁴ For an example of a strong materialist reading which aims to demystify the poetic use of the analogy between cultural and physical labour, see Lloyd's unforgiving essay on Seamus Heaney (21-3, 33-6). Like Jameson, Watkins has noticed a change in "analogical perspective" in literary criticism, from Romantic organicism to material production, and a corresponding lexical shift, from "creativity" to "labour." Watkins argues, however, that the analogy between material and ideological production might be pursued, not to create obfuscation, but to show how "structurally similar distinctions" obtain between them (80, 90-1). In his study of the work of English departments in the United States, Watkins is careful to point out the limitations of this parallel, but claims that understanding workplace organisation in English departments helps explain the ideological work done by literary critics: "thinking about the organisation of work in English departments hardly installs you at some more 'primary' level of concreteness, 'beneath' the mysteries of ideologies [. . .]. The point is not still another new way to 'demystify' ideological discourse from somewhere else; it's to stay there long enough to understand the work of ideological production and what it might explain about the social function of intellectuals who work in English" (81). Watkins' research is influenced by Gramsci's attempt to understand the transformation of intellectual work in his own time, and he cites Gramsci's dictum that the training of

scholars, too, is a "process of adaptation," one which habituates "muscles and nerves as well as intellect" to "effort, tedium, and even suffering" (79-80, 85).

⁵ For a sample of the extensive literature on the "new class" see, in addition to Galbraith, Bell, Gouldner, Ehrenreich, Larson, and Derber.

⁶ The frequent juxtaposition of the terms "work and writing" or "labour and literature" in recent literary criticism demonstrates the growing interest in what Bromell calls "work studies" (2). I am attempting to explain why the writers I discuss made frequent use of the analogy between mental and physical labour, and to unpack the different and contradictory ideological effects of these analogies. To distinguish my own study from other critical work in the field, let me also say what I am not doing. I am not looking at the depiction of the labouring poor. In this tradition of criticism, see Barrell's *The Dark Side of the Landscape*, Harrison, Heinzelman, "The Uneducated Imagination: Romantic Representations of Labor." I wish to distinguish my study, too, from that of Siskin, Brian Goldberg, and Schoenfield, who have written on the discursive construction of professional identity in the Romantic period. See, also, footnote 16. These critics are primarily interested in the way Romantic authors discursively enforced a hierarchy of mental and manual labour (Siskin, *The Work of Writing* 24). By contrast, I argue that by invoking manual labourers for polemical purposes in their own self-representations, the writers I study are as interested in the formation of rhetorical alliances between intellectuals and ordinary labourers as in the creation of distinctions. Whenever the analogy between mental and material labour has

been noticed, it has been summarily criticised, in Jamesonian fashion, as a transparent attempt to alleviate the writer's anxiety about the inutility of intellectual production. Wordsworth's poetry has been a particular object of criticism on this account. See, for example, Liu (352-3); Simpson (*Wordsworth's Historical Imagination* 34-5); and Patterson (278). Finally, I should make the point that I am not exploring economic metaphors for poetic labour, in the manner of Levinson and Heinzelman, *The Economics of the Imagination*. Other relevant studies of literary labour in the period are those by Jonathan Grossman and Spiegelman. Outside the Romantic period, I have benefited from the work of Goodman, Guillory ("Dalila's House"), Gartner, and Weinstein.

⁷ On "representation" as an issue in discourses on "class," see Stuart Hall, Hitchcock, and Spivak.

⁸ I make this argument tentatively. If labour on the one hand indicates sociality, it also indicates, in a tradition of thought extending from John Locke through Adam Smith, independence; one's labour was the exemplary form of private property. The discourse on labour in the hands of these intellectuals was a discourse about writerly independence, merit, and individuation as much as it was about the commonality of all labourers.

⁹ Thomas' anthology has been an invaluable resource in my attempt to track the development of the concept of mental labour. Like Bromell, Thomas points out that the concept of work or labour is difficult to define because the meaning of the word

changes in different historical periods and because it embodies ideological and political points of view (xv-xvi; Bromell 4-6). Again, the publication, by Bradshaw and Ozment, of another anthology of writings on work, is evidence of the critical interest in "work studies."

¹⁰ I should note one direction consciously *not* taken in this thesis. The substantive "labour," insofar as it indicates bodily labour rather than mental or manual labour, could also refer to the labour of childbirth. The earliest use documented by the *OED* of labour in this sense occurs in 1595, and the earliest figurative use--to describe some momentous and impending event--occurs almost contemporaneously, in 1606. No less than the labour of the field-hand, the labour of women in childbirth was available for figurative appropriation; but this would be another study.

¹¹ Barrell is the literary historian who has written most extensively on the challenge posed by the discourse and values of the new "science" of political economy, with its economic understanding of what it meant to be human, to the older aristocratic discourse of civic humanism (*English Literature in History* 21-25; *The Birth of Pandora* xiv-xv). On the re-evaluation of "work" in the eighteenth century, see also Jordan (1-14).

¹² See Coleridge's *Table Talk* entry for 7 April 1832: "All harmony is founded on a relation to rest--on relative rest. Take a metallic plate, and strew sand on it; sound an harmonic chord over the sand, and all the grain will whirl about in circles or other geometrical figures, but always round or as it were depending on some point of sand

relatively at rest; sound a discord, and every grain will whisk about without any order at all, in no figures and with no points of rest" (*Collected Works* 14: 284).

¹³ According to the *OED*, Smith's is the first use of the adjective "productive" to designate an activity which, engaged in the production of commodities for exchange, creates wealth and value. Marx, for analytical reasons, used "productive" to designate only that labour employed in the creation of surplus value (*Capital, Volume One* 1038-49). For a sample of the vast literature on the productive/ unproductive dichotomy, see Resnick and Wolff (132-41). Bromell suggests that writers eventually replaced the productive/ unproductive with the mental/ manual distinction because it was more amenable to writers' sense of their own worth (22).

¹⁴ What made Smith's book a useful weapon in the hands of apologists for capitalism, like Burke, was his acceptance, as both natural and just, of the capitalist relation of production and his tendency to appeal to economic self-interest to defend moral conclusions (McNally, *Political Economy* 261; McNally, *Against the Market* 61; Anthony, *The Ideology of Work* 56-7). On the issue of productive versus unproductive labour, as on other economic questions, Cobbett seems to have followed Paine: "There are two distinct classes of men in this nation, those who pay taxes, and those who receive and live upon the taxes" (*The Complete Writings of Thomas Paine* 2: 478).

¹⁵ Another reason for the emergence of a discourse on intellectuals at this time has been suggested by Wahrman, who argues that whether the decades after 1790

"were singular or not in terms of social change, they were surely characterised by distinct and dramatic political strains." This highly-charged political atmosphere made representational practices matter: conceptualisations of society were, in these decades, imbued with a particular ideological force because they were implicated "in the struggle over the social and political order" (9-10). If representations mattered, I would add, then the representation of intellectuals--those on whom the labour of representing depended--was of no less political importance.

¹⁶ In his seminal *The Origins of Modern English Society*, Perkin notes the anomalous position of the non-capitalist, professional middle-class. By their shared source of income, he argues, these mental workers--doctors, lawyers, public officials, as well as writers--constitute a distinct class who are remunerated in the form of a (non-competitive) fixed salary or fee. The value set on services is fixed by the profession itself, and its ability to monopolise the provision of a certain skill or service, rather than by direct bargaining in the market (252-4). This class of intellectuals emancipated itself from the patronage of the rich with the increased demand for its services as a result of urbanisation and rising living standards (254). Perkin views the rise of the profession of letters--"the most intellectual of professions"--as a token of what he takes to be the rise in the status of the professional intellectual in society (255). Authorship, he says, "was no longer a pastime for gentlemen like Dryden, Addison and Pope and a low-paid occupation for Grub Street hacks like Defoe or Johnson, but a regular profession at which a Walter Scott, a Southey or a Cobbett

might make a comfortable, sometimes a handsome living" (255). On Romantic professionalism, see Siskin, Schoenfield, and Brian Goldberg, and see footnote 6.

The emergence of the intellectual and the rise of the modern professions are clearly consanguineous processes, though, equally obviously, the two categories are not identical. I would distinguish the status of the "professional" writer--someone who made his or her living, and derived his or her main source of identity, from writing--from that of the professions as such. At the very least, the ability to monopolise the provision of this service through strict accreditation is limited, and the use-value to society of a writer's services is less certain than that of a doctor or lawyer; anyone, as Hazlitt lamented, could be a "mere author" (*Complete Works* 8: 79). Historically, as Frances Ferguson has remarked, the intellectual has been "imperfectly professionalized" ("Forum: The Intellectual in the Twenty-First Century" 1125). For this reason, the writer is more obviously engaged in what Jameson calls the "elaboration, reproduction, or critique of ideology" (*The Political Unconscious* 45).

¹⁷ Simpson has written at length on the origin of the antitheoretical and antimethodical prejudice of Anglo-American culture--which may be a counterpart to the anti-intellectual bias--in the debate upon the French Revolution (*Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt against Theory* 3-4). Simpson claims, in fact, that the antirationalist sentiment of 1790 appealed to a previously constituted tradition of common sense in English intellectual life (38).

¹⁸ The consolidation of the intellectuals as a self-conscious class, possessing a collective sense of its own identity, was almost certainly a phenomenon of the late nineteenth century, and historians usually trace its origins to Russia and eastern Europe (intelligentsia) or to France during the Dreyfus affair (intellectuals). Habermas is surely right to suggest that what we witness in the mid-to-late nineteenth century is the self-definition of the intellectuals as what Mannheim called a "free-floating" stratum. This group imagined itself free not just from the bourgeois public within which it germinated, but from every social location (*The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* 174). As I shall continue to emphasise, however, not one of the writers I discuss would have considered himself detached from social location, or have considered detachment as a cause for self-congratulation; each employed the analogy of mental and manual labour to imply his connectedness. From this perspective, intellectuals' self-definition as an unattached social group can be seen as an attempt to make the best of a bad hand.

¹⁹ In this and the following paragraph I draw quite heavily on the parallel accounts of a number of theorists. In particular, the following three writers divide theories of intellectuals in roughly similar ways: Eyerman (1-31); Ross (209-32); and Szacki (229-46). In the interests of brevity, I have tended to flatten the differences between these authors, but I am not misrepresenting the general body of thought. Eyerman remarks, correctly I think, that all these later theories of intellectuals are the

offspring of the Enlightenment and of the eighteenth-century debate on the possibility of progress, the uses of knowledge, and the proper application of human reason (27).

²⁰One way of interpreting the anti-intellectualism of intellectuals during the period 1790-1840--I am adapting here Raven's explanation of the self-criticisms of the new middle class in the late eighteenth century--is as part of a wider discourse aimed at defending legitimate intellectual practice (Raven 9-14). That is, anti-intellectualism, the strategy of identifying scapegoats, was part of an attempt to legitimate the social and political ascendancy of some intellectuals by demonstrating that they could use their power responsibly to criticise the unacceptable use of intellectual capital. Guillory makes a similar point regarding the anti-intellectualism within our own culture: the use of the term "intellectual" as an insult involves the singling out (by more conservative intellectuals) of a particular radical sector from the broad class of intellectual workers, and generalising them as "intellectuals per se" ("Literary Critics as Intellectuals" 112).

²¹ The phrase is Habermas' ("Heinrich Heine" 75). As Neil Lazarus pointed out to me in conversation, just as Habermas makes room for national difference within his broad sociological category of the bourgeois public sphere, so we can identify different historical trajectories in the development of the universal category of the intellectual.

²² I put quotation marks around the term middle-class because social class is at issue in any discussion of intellectuals. As Guillory has summarised, intellectuals have always provided difficulties for a Marxist class-analysis because of their uncertain relationship to the economic system of production ("Literary Critics as Intellectuals"

123-4). While I don't directly address this sociological issue, throughout this thesis I presuppose that the writer's "class position" is inadequate as an explanation for what he writes. Class, rather, is the category that requires explanation.

²³ On the internalisation of the "spurious" "norm of productivity" in academic self-justification, see Guillory, "Preprofessionalism" (97).

²⁴ On the "exploitation" of the "unmetaphysical masses in a rhetorical gesture of moral one-upmanship" in some current forms of academic discourse, see the recent exchange in the *London Review of Books* between Laura Mandell and Hal Foster: *LRB*, 21 September 2000; *LRB*, November 2000; *LRB*, 9 November 2000. I am grateful to Dr. Mandell for allowing me to see a longer version of her published letter.

²⁵ This point is made briefly by Davidoff and Hall (30). For a development of this thought, see Jordan (9-11).

²⁶ The key tensions in Burke's thought, between his aristocratic and bourgeois values, have been defined by Kramnick, MacPherson, Reid, Freeman, and Furniss (*Edmund Burke's Aesthetic Ideology*).

²⁷ My chapter on Cobbett builds on the early work of Williams and E. P. Thompson. I follow the lead of more recent critics, such as Dyck, Olivia Smith, Natrass, and Gilmartin, who have taken Cobbett seriously as an intellectual and as a rhetorically aware prose writer.

²⁸ My thesis modifies Natarajan's portrait of Hazlitt as an unrepentant idealist and challenges the common critical view--argued most cogently by Barrell, *The*

Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt, and Dart, Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism--that Hazlitt's radical democratic political commitments were constantly compromised by his intellectual and artistic allegiances. My reading is closest to Paulin's, who attends in detail to Hazlitt's use of physical processes as metaphors for his own work. While Paulin's is an intertextual reading that relies on an elucidation of the Dissenting tradition with which Hazlitt was familiar, I am interested in the immediate polemical contexts in which Hazlitt's essays are written. It is worth noting that Hazlitt's ambiguous use of the phrase "aristocracy of letters" has led to erroneous readings of his views. Bate's is one instance of this misunderstanding ("Shakespeare and Original Genius" 94).

²⁹Not surprisingly there has been more critical attention to Carlyle's use of the terms "labour" and "work" than to any of the other authors I discuss. The most relevant recent studies of are those by Ulrich, Treadwell, and Plotz. Surprisingly, however, no critic has discussed Carlyle's obsessive use, the word is not too strong, of the mental/ manual analogy.

Chapter Two. The Sweat of the Body and the Sweat of the Mind:

Edmund Burke's Mental Labour

In the previous chapter, I quoted at length from the third of Edmund Burke's *Letters on a Regicide Peace* (1796), where he yokes together bodily and physical labour to suggest that the burden of labour falls equally on all men. The context for Burke's remarks is the lack of enthusiasm in Britain for pursuing the war against the French republic, and the *Letters on a Regicide Peace* were written primarily to discourage pacification and to kindle a national ardour for the conflict with revolutionary France. In the third *Letter* Burke counters arguments from opponents of the war who claimed that Britain was physically unable to bear the cost of sustaining its campaign. According to Burke, it was the *will* to continue the war that was lacking, and in his opinion many of the opponents of the war in Britain were in reality friends of the new republic who were doing their best to weaken national morale and to undermine popular zeal for a prolonged fight.

In order to know whether or not "great distress and misery have been the consequence of this war," Burke avers, he must ascertain on whom and in what manner the burden of war presses. First he considers the situation of the lower classes. Burke claims to be able to demonstrate that, far from being diminished by the war, the lowest class, "the common people [whose] "stock is in their persons and in their earnings," have thrived during it; he finds that the able-bodied population has increased and that the rates of wages they receive have been "greatly augmented" (*Writings and*

Speeches 9: 352-4).¹ To the objection that the war had been responsible for the high price of provisions during the year 1796, Burke replies that the price of food is a result of short supply, a scant harvest, rather than of the war. He then argues powerfully, in the passage I alluded to in the previous chapter, against any government initiative to alleviate the distress caused by the high price of food. Because this dense passage brings together many of the themes and ideas in Burke's writings that I wish to discuss, this chapter can be considered as an extended commentary on this extract. For this reason I quote it again, here, without ellipses:

An untimely shower or an unseasonable drought; a frost too long continued, or too suddenly broken up, with rain and tempest; the blight of the spring, or the smut of the harvest; will do more to cause the distress of the belly than all the contrivances of all Statesmen can do to relieve it. Let Government protect and encourage industry, secure property, repress violence, and discountenance fraud, it is all that they have to do. In other respects the less they meddle in these affairs the better; the rest is in the hands of our Master and theirs. We are in a constitution of things wherein--"*Modo sol nimius, modo corripit imber.*" [Now too much heat, now too much rain destroyed the crops.] But I will push this matter no further. As I have said a good deal upon it at various times during my publick service, and have lately written something on it, which may yet see the light, I shall content myself now with observing, that the vigorous and laborious class of life has lately got from the *bon ton* of the humanity of this day, the name of the "*labouring poor.*" We have heard many plans for the

relief of the "*Labouring Poor*." This puling jargon is not as innocent as it is foolish. In meddling with great affairs, weakness is never innoxious. Hitherto the name of Poor (in the sense in which it is used to excite compassion) has not been used for those who can, but for those who cannot labour--for the sick and infirm; for orphan infancy; for languishing and decrepid age; but when we affect to pity as poor those who must labour or the world cannot exist, we are trifling with the condition of mankind. It is the common doom of man that he must eat his bread by the sweat of his brow, that is by the sweat of his body, or the sweat of his mind. If this toil was inflicted as a curse, it is as might be expected from the curses of the Father of all Blessings--it is tempered with many alleviations, many comforts. Every attempt to fly from it, and to refuse the very terms of our existence, becomes much more truly a curse, and heavier pains and penalties fall upon those who would elude the tasks which are put upon them by the great Master Workman of the World, who in his dealings with his creatures sympathizes with their weakness, and speaking of a creation wrought by mere will out of nothing, speaks of six days of *labour* and one of *rest*. I do not call a healthy young man, chearful in his mind, and vigorous in his arms, I cannot call such a man *poor*; I cannot pity my kind as a kind, merely because they are men. This affected pity, only tends to dissatisfy them with their condition, and to teach them to seek resources where no resources are to be found, in something else than their own industry, and frugality, and sobriety. Whatever may be the intention (which because I do not know, I cannot

dispute) of those who would discontent mankind with this strange pity, they act towards us in the consequences, as if they were our worst enemies. (9: 354-356)

As in his more sustained attempt to discourage the state's efforts to regulate markets, *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity*--the "lately written something" referred to above--Burke makes a case for a laissez-faire economic policy by equating the laws of the market with natural and, therefore, divine law; accordingly, any move to interfere with the operation of these economic laws, such as through the Speenhamland system of proportioning poor relief supplements to the price of bread, was for Burke an attempt to amend the fundamental law of existence, that man must honestly earn his bread by the sweat of his brow.² The "commonness" of this law is confirmed by the metaphorical assimilation of manual and mental activity, "the sweat of his body, or the sweat of his mind."

Turning to consider the war burden borne by the higher classes, Burke asserts that they have escaped the burden of the war effort altogether. The rich and powerful do not normally contribute their "persons" to the war effort; that is to say they are not likely to be killed, but, instead, supply the means of carrying on the war, through taxation; in addition, they furnish "the mind that actuates the whole machine" (356). It is the mind--the intellect and character--that has been lacking in the present war, writes Burke: a lack of mental resilience, a want of courage and enterprise (357-8). The military strategy of the British was defensive, and this mode of conduct had "prevented even the common havock of war in our population, and especially among that class,

whose duty and privilege of superiority it is, to lead the way amidst the perils and slaughter of the field of battle" (358-9). It is this higher class of people, government ministers and other national public leaders, whom he wants to fire with enthusiasm, for they will, in turn, command the respect and inspire the zeal of the lower classes. This activity, we may deduce, is an example of the "sweat of the mind." We can note that when Burke suggests that the labours of the body and the labours of the mind are equivalent, he implies a distinction as well as an identity. Just as the burden of war was shouldered equally, though not in the same way, by the rich and the poor, so, while the analogy between the sweat of the body and the sweat of the mind suggests that the burden of atoning for original sin is borne equally by rich and poor, the sacrifice demanded of the two classes is not of the same kind. The pains of those who are appointed by their position in society to labour with their minds rather than their bodies are equal and analogous, though not identical, to the pains suffered by the "vigorous and laborious class of life" misnamed "the labouring poor."

It is important to remember that Burke is not talking to the lower orders, the manual labourers; hence, while this passage articulates a mystifying ideological perspective, the intent is not primarily to mystify. The text is about the importance of ideology, and its assumed audience is other writers, intellectuals, producers of ideology. Nevertheless, at some level the analogy of mental and manual labour in the quoted passage is apologetic in nature, as it serves to generalise the physical pains of the labourer. The claim that all men must labour, the equation of all labour with pain and difficulty, and the anti-enlightenment view that misery and suffering are inherent in

humanity's fallen condition rather than in the effects of an economic or political system are all intended to reconcile the labourers to their situation and thereby secure a tractable and productive work force for the capitalist and the land-owner. When Cobbett and Hazlitt employ figures of speech linking mental and manual work, they usually do not do so unreflectively. In Burke's text, the assimilation of mental and manual labour is unquestioning, and for this reason I want to draw out the contradictions in his figuration of mental work.

As I hinted in chapter one, the real polemical energy of the passage is aimed at other head workers--politicians, writers, and other public figures--whom Burke accused of instigating unrest among the common people. Earlier in the same letter, Burke writes that while it is natural to feel pity for the suffering of others, mankind cannot be "relieved in the gross," and hence the mind's "elective affections" are the strongest evidence of our real affinities (307). The display of "affected pity" in the epithet "labouring poor"--the "wicked [. . .] political canting language, 'The Labouring Poor'" Burke called it (121)--did not, in Burke's opinion, evince a genuine concern, but was a tactic employed by the politically ambitious. The opposition to the war, the affectation of pity for the poor, and the criticism of the existing political, social and economic systems were all of a piece in Burke's view: mere rhetoric to stir up discontent and garner popular support for unscrupulous and ambitious men. As early as 1790, in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, Burke suspected that part of the impetus for the Revolution came from the ambitions of certain members of the nobility, who had espoused democratic and egalitarian ideas in order to place

themselves above their natural fellows: "turbulent, discontented men of quality, in proportion as they are puffed up with personal pride and arrogance, generally despise their own order. One of the first symptoms they discover of a selfish and mischievous ambition, is a profligate disregard of a dignity which they partake with others" (8: 97-8). In *A Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*, published in the following year, Burke accused members of the French nobility (the reference is to the Duc d'Orleans) of leveling themselves with their footmen, "that through this degradation they might afterwards put themselves above their natural equals" (8: 329). Where government and power rested on opinion rather than force, democratic sentiments could be irresponsibly championed by some superior men to bolster their own political capital. In a sustained attack on Charles Fox and his followers, *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* (1791), Burke remarked that "those who speculate on change always make a great number among people of rank and fortune, as well as amongst the low and indigent" (110). The rich and the great who expressed revolutionary sentiments were gambling on political outcomes, Burke believed (109-10). His most pointed comment on the Fox faction was his *Observations on the Conduct of the Minority* (1793), where he accused them of adopting the French ideas of liberty and equality to make the multitude the instruments of their ambitions. "Under a specious appearance (not uncommonly put on by men of unscrupulous ambition) that of tenderness and compassion to the Poor," Fox and his cohorts opposed the war with France. This opposition was dangerous, Burke pointed out, because it undercut support for the war among the poor, who must, after all, do the bulk of the actual fighting (8: 433-5).

Already France, a nation that claimed to be the “deliverer” of the poor from the oppressions of the rich and powerful, possessed an advantage over England in the propaganda war for the hearts and minds of the populace (435).

Those members of the nobility and those intellectuals who talked of compassion for the poor, in Burke’s view displayed "their humanity at the expense of their honesty, or their understandings" (9: 352).³ Social inequality, he insisted, was divinely ordained, and, therefore, not only inevitable, but necessary, and just. Different classes of people were naturally fitted for different occupations. The complex organism of society depended, for its effective functioning, on the unequal portioning of status and wealth, so that the mass of mankind, who were adapted for bodily toil, might be compelled to undertake the necessary labour of supporting life. Compassion, or pity, Burke warned, was a dangerous emotion, because it might raise the expectations of the labourers and foster resentment when those expectations were disappointed. Such sentiments might serve as a pretext for expanding the work of government, and it was this "restless desire of governing too much" that had led directly to the overthrow of the French monarchy: "All [. . .] that happened amiss in the course even of domestic affairs, was attributed to the Government" (9: 144). Not only do discontented intellectuals hold out to the poor the dangerous, impossible-to-fulfill promise of escaping from the burden of labour ("this strange pity"), but they themselves avoid the real intellectual labour of dealing with the world and with mankind as it was. However, if Burke here hard-headedly emphasises that ethical sentiments need to be kept separate from economic policy decisions, elsewhere he is

less scrupulous in doing this; as I shall go on to show, when it suits him, Burke appeals to pity or compassion as a supplement to an economic argument.

Throughout this chapter I will demonstrate the centrality of images and metaphors of labour in Burke's writings on the Revolution, as he distinguishes his own labour as a political thinker and practical statesman from the work of radical thinkers and revolutionary politicians. I argue that Burke relies on the term "labour" to articulate the difference between himself and his political opponents, whom he accuses of laziness, of not engaging in the real, arduous work of political thought. The "sweat of the mind" not only separates Burke from manual workers, but differentiates him from those intellectuals who, in advocating unimplementable policies to remedy the plight of the poor, refused to admit that labour was a necessary part of the human condition. Utopian social fantasies and extravagant political theories did not engage with the actual miseries of life (8: 114). If those who advertised their compassion for the poor were guilty of evading a fair share of the world's labour, the apparently uncompassionate Burke, on the other hand, does fulfill his share of that burden. By a rhetorical sleight of hand, then, Burke seems more closely allied to the cares of the common people than those who were their most passionate advocates.

It is not surprising, in one respect, that Burke would make use of the category "labour" to distinguish himself from his adversaries. As a self-made, unpropertied man of talent, it is part of Burke's ethos that ability and sheer hard work should be rewarded. From his perspective as a bourgeois political economist, it is, above all, the vocabulary of merit--industry, talent and enterprise--that assigns worth. But while

Burke makes great use of the term "labour" in his discourse on the French Revolution, his use of that term is neither straightforward nor consistent. For, as a number of scholars have noted, there is a conflict between Burke the bourgeois political economist and Burke the defender of hereditary privilege (MacPherson 6). Jacobinism he famously defined as "the revolt of the enterprising talents of a country against its property" (9: 241). His defence of aristocratic privilege is, thus, frequently couched in terms directly opposed to the meritocratic principle, and he lays much of the blame for the French Revolution on the ambitions of men of talent and ability--men like himself. This conflict appears throughout his writings in the 1790s and, consequently, "labour" can have a different inflection depending both on the persona Burke is adopting and on the identity of those he is attacking. On one hand, from the point of view of the political economist, his opponents are lazy and tend to take "tricking short-cuts;" from the perspective of the defender of aristocratic privilege, on the other hand, he accuses the revolutionaries of working too much, of being too industrious and zealous and leaving little time for reflection. Conversely, while Burke usually emphasises the magnitude of his own labours, he sometimes plays them down, constructing his labour more on the paradigm of hereditary privilege and aristocratic ease.

My strategy is not to try to resolve these tensions, but to trace Burke's curious and contradictory reliance on the term labour to differentiate himself from other non-manual workers.⁴ The contradictions in Burke's political thought--between his defence of merit and his championing of the principle of ascribed status--surface most obtrusively in his *apologia pro vita sua*, *A Letter to a Noble Lord* (1796), a fact

noticed by Burke's contemporaries and remarked on by numerous critics since (De Bruyn 89). It is in this pamphlet, too, that we find his most comprehensive and ambiguous treatment of his mental labour. In *A Letter to a Noble Lord*, Burke proposes a resolution of sorts to these ideological contradictions, but the terms of the resolution show Burke himself shying away from the arduous work of political arrangement. In *A Letter to a Noble Lord*, the arguments Burke advances to demonstrate his merit and prove his own industriousness are supplemented by an appeal to the compassion of his auditors. By his own criteria, his arguments are rendered specious, and are evidence the shirking of hard labour, of which he constantly accuses his adversaries.

Before taking leave--for the moment, at least--of the excerpt from the *Third Letter on a Regicide Peace*, I want to make one further point about Burke's use of the term "labour," which will serve to reiterate and clarify my argument. In his tract, *Thoughts and Details on Scarcity*--written in 1795 though not published until 1800--which is his most theoretical defence of market economics, Burke takes his stand against the various local initiatives to alleviate hunger on the grounds that the market alone can determine the price of labour and of provisions. "Labour is a commodity like every other," he repeats, "and rises or falls according to the demand" (9: 1223, 126, 130). Any attempt to arbitrarily fix the wages of the poor will fail to achieve what it intends, because an increase in wages will rebound in the form of a diminished demand for manual toil or an increase in the price of the provisions that are the result of that toil. The laws of commerce are as elementary, and as certain in their operation,

as any other law of nature, and the statesman who attempts to defy them might as well fight the law of gravity: "the stone which we had pushed up the hill would only fall back upon them [the labourers]" (123). The laws of commerce are not only immutable but also beneficial and just: beneficial, since the desire of the capitalist-landlord to maximise his profits is to the advantage of everyone in society, and just, since the wages of the labourer are the outcome of a free and fair contract between the employer and his employees (124-5). Burke's metaphors allude to the retribution that must inevitably follow the violation of God's law: "Then the wheel turns round, and the evil complained of falls with aggravated weight on the complainant" (127). As in the *Third Letter on a Regicide Peace*, the terms of the contract between employer and employee are transmuted into "the terms of our existence," the evasion of which produces only "heavier pains" (9: 355).

In urging that the wages of labour should not be arbitrarily adjusted or "equalised," Burke makes a further argument:

Nothing is such an enemy to accuracy of judgment as a coarse discrimination; a want of such classification and distribution as the subject admits of. Encrease the rate of wages to the labourers, say the regulators--as if labour was but one thing and of one value. But this very broad generic term, *labour*, admits, at least, of two or three specific descriptions: and these will suffice, at least, to let gentlemen discern a little of the necessity of proceeding with caution in their coercive guidance of those whose existence depends upon the observance of

still nicer distinctions and sub-divisions, than commonly they resort to in forming their judgments on this very enlarged part of the economy. (127)

The sub-divisions Burke describes here, between able-bodied men, on the one hand, and the old and infirm or women and children, on the other, are listed only to show that the interfering magistrate could never guarantee a fair or efficient proportioning of wages and sustenance, since different classes of people are not equally productive and, therefore, require different amounts of nourishment (127-8). It is worth pausing, however, over Burke's claim that labour is a coarse, generic term that obscures the nice distinctions between different kinds of human work.

The first and most obvious point to make is that, in this text, it is the political economist himself who equalises labour by his insistence that all labour is a commodity. As Marx explained, what characterises the commodity as such is that in it all labour becomes abstract, generic (socially necessary) labour.⁵ The second point to make, and here I refer back to the extract from the *Third Letter on a Regicide Peace*, is that Burke frequently does proceed as if labour were indeed "but one thing and of one value" (127). In this passage, it will be recalled, Burke not only conflates mental and manual labour ("the sweat of the brow," "our common doom") but also conflates labour in the restricted sense of a commodity for exchange with labour in the sense of a quasi-divine human creative capacity ("creation wrought by mere will out of nothing"), a confusion which gives the sanction of timelessness to what is, after all, an historically specific productive relation. Nevertheless, at the same time as he has a tendency to "coarse discrimination," Burke also insists on "nicer distinctions" when he

is attempting to clarify the differences between himself and his political opponents, often relying, paradoxically enough, on the analogy between his own work and manual toil in order to make these differentiations. As I shall argue, in *A Letter to a Noble Lord* Burke virtually admits the failure of his nice distinctions, as he is unable or unwilling to distinguish himself either from his radical opponents or from his aristocratic foe. In this late text, Burke has finally to concede the rhetorical nature of his analogy between mental and manual work, and, thus, he confesses to a coarseness of discrimination of his own.

Before examining Burke's representation of his own labour, it is important to provide a background for my analysis. I will first discuss Burke's attack on intellectuals for inflaming revolutionary sentiment, and will then summarise the contradictions of Burke's stance on the Revolution insofar as it involves a conflict between his bourgeois and aristocratic values.

The *Reflections on the Revolution in France* were provoked by a sermon welcoming the French Revolution given by the dissenting minister Richard Price to the Revolution Society in November 1789. "I have lived to see a diffusion of knowledge," Price enthused, "which has undermined superstition and error" (Burke, *Writings and Speeches* 8: 115). Burke was less sanguine about the progress and dispersal of knowledge. With masterly understatement, Burke begs leave to differ with "this political preacher" about the benefits that might be expected to accrue to the human race as a consequence of the extension and dissemination of knowledge: "Dr. Price

seems to overvalue the great acquisitions of light which he has obtained and diffused in this age [. . .]. The age has not yet the compleat benefit of that diffusion of knowledge that has undermined superstition and error" (105, 116, 123). With this remark he begins the famous passage in the *Reflections* on the "rape" of the Queen of France; for Burke, the most significant "work of our new light and knowledge," was the dissolution of the chivalric manners--"this mixed system of opinion and sentiment"--that had underpinned the feudal social relations of the *ancien regime* (125, 127). In consequence, the age of chivalry had been rudely supplanted by that of "sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators" (127).

The very prosperity of Europe at the outbreak of the Revolution, Burke contended, had depended on "the spirit of our old manners and opinions," the superstitions and prejudices which were now being eroded by the "barbarous philosophy" of rationalism (126-7). William Godwin, with an optimism equaling that of Price, would announce that the forces of commerce and learning had eroded the old ascribed distinctions of birth and place by showing that wealth and knowledge were not the monopoly of the privileged few (791-2). The conjunction of the two was significant, for the spread of commerce had freed learning from its dependence on patronage (792). In contrast, Burke suspected that both commerce and learning owed more than they knew to manners and opinions and to the social relations they authorised. In a passage from the *Reflections*, which I quote again, Burke laments that learning had cut itself free of its traditional patrons:

The nobility and the clergy, the one by profession, the other by patronage, kept learning in existence, even in the midst of arms and confusions [. . .]. Learning paid back what it received to nobility and to priesthood; and paid it back with usury, by enlarging their ideas and by furnishing their minds. Happy if they had all continued to know their indissoluble union, and their proper place! Happy if learning, not debauched by ambition, had been satisfied to continue the instructor, and not aspired to be the master! Along with its natural protectors and guardians, learning will be cast into the mire, and trodden down under the hoofs of a swinish multitude. (8: 130)

Ambitious intellectuals, Burke forecasts, by propagating equality, will not only level the distinctions between themselves and their superiors, but at the same time between themselves and those below them, and thus abolish the system of proper subordination which supported their own practice. Of course Burke must have known that radicals like Price and Priestley did not want summarily to abolish private property; he argued, rather, that by attacking the legitimacy of church property, for example, radical ideas were undermining the principle of property itself. Formal reason would be used against the reasoners themselves: "the peasants give you back that coin of sophistic reason, on which you have set your image and superscription" (270). Radical ideas were subverting the foundations of all order: the continued subordination of the poor, labouring mass of mankind.

It is not possible to overestimate the importance Burke gives to the influence of ideas in causing the French Revolution. In Burke's reading, the Revolution of 1789

was the first "compleat revolution" because it was in effect a reorganisation of the "constitution of the mind of man" (*Writings* 9: 147). It was the attempt to root out the principles of "natural" deference and subordination in mankind that gave the Revolution its truly radical character. In the *Reflections*, for instance, Burke refers to that "most important of all revolutions [. . .] I mean a revolution in sentiments, manners, and moral opinions" (8: 131).⁶ This revolution in nature, "of the moral constitution of man," could only have been effected by the dispersal of subversive ideas through the medium of print (347-8). The conditions which had made the French Revolution possible were, first, the advent of print technology, and, second, the growth of the market for cultural goods, which together had enabled writers and intellectuals to free themselves from protection and domination by aristocratic tutelage. In a taut exposition of this idea, written in 1796, Burke writes that a "silent revolution in the moral world" preceded and prepared the way for a political revolution (9: 291). The growth of the power and influence of the ambitious middle classes had broken the chain of subordination that had existed between the great and the populace. The rise of print and the growth of the power of the press, which had made every government, in essence, democratic by making legislative and executive bodies dependent on opinion, made it easy for this commercial and literary class to propagate their arid and destructive principles (9: 291-6). In perhaps his most telling description of the character of the French Revolution and of the nature of the war in which Britain was engaged, Burke warned the British government that the nation was

at war with an "*armed doctrine* [. . .] a faction of opinion, and of interest, and of enthusiasm, in every country" (9: 199).

In the *Reflections*, and in all of his subsequent writings on the Revolution, Burke insisted on the importance of radical ideas in providing an impetus to that event, and also on the part played in the Revolution by intellectuals, men of letters and philosophers, in disseminating those ideas. In the *Reflections* Burke blames two classes of men, the monied interest and the political men of letters, for the upheaval (8: 158-60). The latter had acted as propagandists for the new money:

Writers, especially when they act in a body, and with one direction, have great influence on the publick mind; the alliance therefore of these writers with the monied interest had no small effect in removing the popular odium and envy which attended that species of wealth. These writers, like the propagators of all novelties, pretended to a zeal for the poor, and the lower orders, whilst in their satires they rendered hateful, by every exaggeration, the faults of courts, of nobility, and of priesthood. (162)

This "literary cabal," Burke explains, had persecuted hereditary privilege and the Christian religion, and undermined support for the ancien regime. The pretended sympathy with the lower orders was a vehicle for the insidious infiltration of opinion by radical ideology. Any declaration, however well-meant, of sympathy with the lower orders was potentially subversive. Raising the expectations of those who could never, from their situation, expect anything other than a life of hard labour, was to play fast and loose with the very foundations upon which civilised society depended.

J. G. A. Pocock has argued that by 1795, while the monied interest had become less visible in Burke's explanation of the French Revolution, Burke never stopped emphasising that the genius of the Revolution lay in the skeptical ideas of the *philosophes* and *gens de lettres*, and in the political theorists who were implementing their ideas. Above all, argues Pocock, the Revolution, in Burke's interpretation, is a *trahison des clercs*, or the desertion by intellectuals of their place and responsibility in the social order (204-9). In *A Letter to William Elliot* (1795), which Michael Freeman praises as Burke's best account of the causes of the French Revolution, Burke claims that the prosperity of France in 1789 contained "the seeds of its own danger":

In one part of the society it caused laxity and debility. In the other it produced bold spirits and dark designs. A false philosophy passed from academies into courts, and the great themselves were infected with the theories which conducted to their ruin. Knowledge, which in the past two centuries either did not exist at all, or existed solidly on right principles and in chosen hands, was now diffused, weakened, and perverted [. . .]. Men of talent began to compare in the partition of the common stock of public prosperity, the proportion of the dividends, with the merits of the claimants. As usual, they found their portion not equal to their estimate (or perhaps to the public estimate) of their own worth. (*Writings* 9: 39; Freeman 195)

This clear explanation only amplifies the account already presented in the *Reflections*.

The diffusion of knowledge creates a class of men whose capital consisted in their ability to produce and disseminate knowledge, who were not now dependent on the

nobility or the church for their livelihood and who could use knowledge as a weapon in a class war. In the *Reflections*, Burke's warnings about the dangerous influence of literary men culminates in an extraordinary passage in which he laments that the capacity to influence public opinion had made the "intolerance of the tongue and of the pen" formidable enough to strike at "property, liberty, and life" (161).⁷

We must be alert, however, to how potentially contradictory Burke's stance as a defender of hereditary privilege was. As a number of critics have argued, Burke's social position is not essentially different from the revolutionary intellectuals he attacks. In the paragraph immediately prior to the extract cited above from *A Letter to William Elliot*, Burke claims that he had defended the hereditary order with the only arms he possessed: his pen and his voice, the same instruments that had undermined property and religion in the old regime (39). Burke himself was, like the intellectuals he opposed, a man of talent without property who had had to make his way by his own industry and ability. He too, was a man of letters, who had made his mark in eighteenth-century English society as a publicist for the Whig party, and an Irishman, who was seen by the English political establishment as an outsider and an upstart (MacPherson 6; Furniss, *Aesthetic Ideology* 256). Moreover, as well as sharing their social position, Burke also articulated the meritocratic ideology of these new men, as his political economic writings testify.

Most Burke scholars address in some way the tension between Burke the aspiring bourgeois politician and man of letters and Burke the defender of hereditary privilege. Burke was committed to the principle of merit, the fair reward for industry

and talent, and attached to the aristocratic values of respecting one's place in the given order. The first to insist on the two sides of Burke was Isaac Kramnick, who argued that Burke's ambivalence reflects the central ideological tension of his age: the conflict between the dominant aristocratic principles and values and emergent bourgeois ones (Kramnick 7, 109). Burke expresses a confrontation between the values of merit and equality of opportunity--the bourgeois equation of "worth and identity with achievement and work" and the demand that careers in public life be open to talents--and the values of ascribed status and privilege by right of birth (17, 109, 193). In attacking dissenting radicals, Kramnick argues, Burke was repudiating that part of himself which identified with the parvenu bourgeois (111). Like Kramnick, Christopher Reid attends to Burke's ambiguous social position: "As a consequence of his own social experience and political career, Burke owed allegiance to two closely allied classes: the landed and politically dominant aristocracy, and the professional, mercantile and manufacturing bourgeoisie" (Reid 220-1). Burke's desire to express his sense of his own worth in terms of industry and achievement comes into conflict with the more deferential attitude expected from someone who relied for his place in society on the patronage of the Whig aristocracy (79, 83-4).⁸

Building on Kramnick's work while contesting his psycho-biographical explanation, C. B. MacPherson argues for the coherence of the two positions, that of the defender of hierarchy and that of the free market liberal. He contends that Burke saw that the "traditional order was already a capitalist order" (7, 5, 63). Burke was a firm advocate of Smithian laissez-faire economics and limited government and he

believed, as we have seen, that the self-regulating market was providential. He was also a supporter of the aspirations of talent and ability, and believed that British public life should be more open to careerists like himself (MacPherson 51-70). But Burke, according to MacPherson, saw that the capitalist order, of which he was such a enthusiastic proponent, needed the sanction of traditional ideology (61-2). He saw that republican-democratic ideas were attractive to the lower orders and that capitalism needed an ideology that would legitimate and secure the unequal social and economic relationship on which the accumulation of wealth depended (61-2). Throughout his writings on the French Revolution, Burke urged that capitalist accumulation depended on the acceptance by the labouring classes of their subordinate status (69). Tom Furniss adds that the Revolution, far from leading Burke to repudiate his former bourgeois principles, "leads him to insist still more emphatically on the primacy of economic 'laws' over interventionist policies in the name of 'humanity'" (*Aesthetic Ideology* 188). "There is nothing surprising or inconsistent," concludes MacPherson, "in Burke's championing at the same time the traditional English hierarchical society and the capitalist market economy," the latter, in Burke's view, still needed the former (63).

MacPherson's thesis has been enormously influential, and I agree with the substance of his argument. As we shall see, Burke emphasised over and again that capitalism could not do without the ideology which legitimated subordination. It is important to stress, however, that there is at the very least a conflict of vocabulary and rhetoric; in this respect Kramnick and Reid are correct. Kramnick points out, for

example, that the refutation of the aristocratic principle of status involved fundamentally "the notion that status should be achieved through the play of innate differences and abilities, of talent, energy, hard work, and merit" (145). Furthermore, while the *Reflections* laments the effect the abstract norms and logical procedures of "sophisters, oeconomists, and calculators" had had on the dissolution of chivalric manners, from the point of view of the modernising economist the trappings of the old order are simply superfluous. In his famous *Speech on Oeconomical Reform* (1780), for instance, Burke, from the perspective of the cost-counting economist, attacked the "waste and superfluity" of the royal household (Kramnick 161-2; Reid 58-63). A tension always exists, as Sartre has insisted, between the objective needs of the dominant class and "the myths, values and traditions with which it needed to infect other classes in order to ensure its hegemony" (246). The contradictory ideological notions with which Burke legitimates things as they are have been exhaustively identified by Freeman: the conflict between the idea of the paternal state and the laissez-faire notion that forbids the parent to feel pity for his starving children, for example (69, 134).⁹

I want to expand a little on Reid's point about the importance of Burke's ambiguous social position. The differences between Burke and Paine, as David Aers has argued, can be attributed in part to the differences in their political and cultural capital (157-8). The chief form of capital possessed by Burke was his dependence on a personal relationship with those in power (De Bruyn 28-9), while Paine, in Aers' characterisation of him, is an early example of what Gouldner would call a "new class"

of intellectuals who were able to take advantage of the market for cultural products in order to free themselves from dependence on the nobility or church (Aers 158). As a result, Paine favoured a "more politically liberal form of capitalism in which knowledge, the administrative and propagandist skills of the educated bourgeoisie and artisanate would be rewarded on an open market" (157). Burke was engaged in a conflict, therefore, that took place "within the bourgeois intelligentsia" itself (157-8). We can see Burke's attack on radical intellectuals, I suggest, as an attempt to legitimate the ambitions of the class of intellectuals as a whole, by repudiating the excesses of some members of that class. Burke believed that in furthering their own ambitions, these "turbulent" men were in danger of undermining the principles of subordination on which culture and letters, as well as property and wealth, rested. The rhetorical contradictions in Burke's thought, expressive of the ideological conflicts of his age, have been adequately exposed; I want to focus my analysis of those same rhetorical tensions by seeing Burke as engaged in more local disagreements with other intellectuals: what is the proper activity of literary men? how can this activity be legitimately represented? who has the right to rhetorically invoke the "body" of the English nation and for what purposes?

The way Burke separates himself from the radical intellectuals, I argue, is via the category "labour." He differentiates himself from British radicals and French theorists by suggesting that they evade, in their superficialities, the real mental labour of dealing with actually existing misery. By claiming that his own intellectual work was more arduous and difficult than theirs, Burke aimed to undercut the radicals'

assumption that they alone were qualified to speak of and for ordinary labourers. While Burke tirelessly criticised the radicals' strategy of mobilising the populace, however, in affirming his own relationship to the "labourers and mechanics," he effectively acknowledged that the political terrain had altered fundamentally. Bruce James Smith has argued that, for Burke, political conflicts had become doctrinal disputes over the nature of sovereignty, and that what had made these disputes over doctrine dangerous was the "heretofore unknown alliance of the intellectuals and the multitude" (109-10). By its integration into the ordinary life of the masses, "abstract theory had become 'armed doctrine,'" a weapon with which intellectuals could overthrow governments (110-11, 145). The pro-revolutionaries, Burke knew, began with the upper-hand in the battle for the allegiance of the "labourers and mechanics" (8: 434); for this reason, he was not prepared to let their rhetorical strategies pass unchallenged.

Burke's maneuver was difficult, though, for reasons that should be apparent: "labour" is not only the term by which Burke distinguishes his thinking from that of intellectuals like Paine, but was also the term through which Paine and his ilk would attack aristocratic privilege. Burke himself acknowledged that precisely what distinguishes the French state from the English one--and English radicals from the English aristocracy--are the (anti-aristocratic) principles of industry and energy. Consequently, Burke often places his own thinking in an aristocratic lineage, which stresses the importance of being the legitimate heir of tradition rather than the virtue of sheer hard work. It was natural enough for Paine to stress his own industry and merit

in his attack on the hereditary principle (*The Rights of Man* 219); it was a more difficult enterprise to attempt, as Burke did, to marry labour to the defence of privilege, and we should expect contradiction to ensue.

In *The Rights of Man*, Paine argues that the violent excesses of the French Revolution had been lessons that the populace had learned from the previous governments they had lived under, and he uses a popular radical metaphor that expresses the intention of the reform movement: "Lay then the axe to the root, and teach governments humanity. It is their sanguinary punishments which corrupt mankind" (58). The image "lay the axe to the root" suggests honest sweat, a wholesome rustic labour clearing the terrain of some deep-rooted and noxious growth. In his first published parliamentary address on the events across the channel, Burke had already deployed the radicals' image against them. During a debate on the army estimates, in February 1790, Burke responded to Fox's praise for the Revolution by asserting that the doctrine of the rights of man, by attacking the property of land and church, had eroded the sentiment of subordination among the lower classes. The revolutionaries had "with the most atrocious perfidy and breach of all faith among men, laid the axe to the root of all property, and consequently of all national property, by the principles they established, and the example they set, in confiscating all the possessions of the church" (*Speech on the Army Estimates* 313-14). Burke later makes use of the same radical self-representation in his *Scarcity* tract, where he assails government plans to regulate the price of labour or of provisions. It is the balance of

consumption and production that determines price, he insists. Those who interfere with this divine mechanism "directly lay their axe to the root of production itself" (*Writings* 9: 133). Burke draws on the same metaphor to convey the threat posed by government regulators to the capitalist productive relation and to describe the way the French Revolution, through principle and example, had undermined respect for all property; this suggests how closely Burke identified the survival of capitalism with the preservation of the relationship of subordination.

The image of hacking at the roots of a tree serves, for Burke, as an example of immature political work. What had been for Paine an image of a healthy, manly, vigorous labour becomes, in Burke's hands, an image of irresponsible and unthinking activity. Burke warns that destroying an organic entity--the British constitution, for instance, or the old regime of France--is unwise, since the roots of a tree grow and spread over time and cannot easily be replaced by man's artifice. In a slightly different metaphor he argues that solid foundations are necessary to the stability of any building, and that the radicals who destroy old foundations in order to erect society anew are rarely willing to do the time-consuming work of laying new foundations. To work within the constraints not only of physical nature but of specific social and cultural circumstances--"at once to preserve and reform"--is more intellectually demanding (8: 216). It is this "inability to wrestle with difficulty which has obliged the arbitrary assembly of France to commence their schemes of reform with abolition and total destruction," and to rely on "untried speculations" and "loose theories" (216, 214). In Burke's view, the axe-men obliterate obstacles instead of confronting difficulties,

hoping by a few lusty strokes to elude the tiresome work of political arrangement. The work of destroying and pulling down is easy, albeit invigorating, because it is assisted by gravity: "The fall from an height was with an accelerated velocity; but to lift a weight up to that height again was difficult and opposed by the laws of physical and political gravitation" (*Speech on the Army Estimates* 308). Furthermore, the work of destruction does not require any special skill. "Your mob can do this as well at least as your assemblies. The shallowest understanding, the rudest hand, is more than equal to that task. Rage and phrenzy will pull down more in half an hour, than prudence, deliberation, and foresight can build up in an hundred years" (216). The unseen work of laying sound foundations is not as rewarding as the labour of destroying: it is arduous, obscure, and unapplauded.¹⁰

Burke doubted that France would be able to rebuild society as it existed before the Revolution. The French, he argued, have forgotten that society rested upon the principle of subordination. And just as it is easier to knock down than to lay foundations, it is easier to teach rebelliousness than to teach obedience to the labouring populace (*Speech on the Army Estimates* 310). In the *Reflections*, Burke stressed the importance of a tractable and contented labour force to social order, to the security of property and to the accumulation of wealth:

Good order is the foundation of all good things. To be enabled to acquire, the people, without being servile, must be tractable and obedient. The magistrate must have his reverence, the laws their authority. The body of the people must not find the principles of natural subordination by art rooted out of their minds.

They must respect that property of which they cannot partake. They must labour to obtain what by labour can be obtained; and when they find, as they commonly do, the success disproportioned to the endeavour, they must be taught their consolation in the final proportions of eternal justice. Of this consolation, whoever deprives them, deadens their industry, and strikes at the root of all acquisition as of all conservation. He that does this is the cruel oppressor, the merciless enemy of the poor and wretched; at the same time that by his wicked speculations he exposes the fruits of successful industry, and the accumulations of fortune, to the plunder of the negligent, the disappointed, and the unprosperous. (*Writings* 8: 290)

The whole edifice is made to rest, in Burke's account, on order and the respect of labour for property, which in turn depends on the acceptance of the sentiment of natural hierarchy enforced by religion. The principle of equality struck at the root of traditional order by breaking this chain of subordination. The real object of the Revolution was:

[T]o level all those institutions, and to break all those connections, natural and civil, that regulate and hold together the community by a chain of subordination; to raise soldiers against their officers; servants against their masters; tradesmen against their customers; artificers against their employers; tenants against their landlords; curates against their bishops; and children against their parents. (*Speech on the Army Estimates* 315)

The French republic had destroyed all prejudices, and consequently the only way of compelling obedience that remained was through the army. Without the unquestioned respect of the lower for the higher classes, society must be governed by force. But what if the soldier, too, decided to exercise his right of equality? The theory of equal rights opened the door to anarchy and arbitrary possession (*Speech on the Army Estimates* 314-15; *Writings* 8: 267-9).

By undermining the base--the submissiveness of the lower orders--Burke believed that those who promulgated the doctrine of the rights of man attempted to build without foundations, to rest society on thin air rather than on solid ground. The revolutionaries had inverted the order of nature. The ground of all the good things in life--order, property, wealth, and culture--is the labour of ordinary men; the continued existence of property and of all the principles on which society rests depend, in the final analysis, on a tractable and productive labouring class. Those who affect compassion for the poor are, therefore, "trifling with the condition of mankind" (9: 355). Burke is ready to honour every man who works diligently at his occupation, but each man is born to an occupation fitted to his capacities (8: 100). Men from low occupations were not born or made to occupy the position of legislators; the tailor and carpenters whom Burke believed constituted the republic of Paris are a sound body but not a wise head. By attempting to equalise the different classes of society, by placing the lowest members of society at its head, Burke avers, the levelers "pervert the natural order of things; they load the edifice of society, by setting up in the air what the solidity of the structure requires to be on the ground" (100). Theory, abstract and

ungrounded thinking, produces an ungrounded a society without substantive foundations.

The metaphor of firmness or solidity to describe the British constitution occurs throughout Burke's writings on the Revolution. It suggests a political system which had grown over time, a system which had resulted from the combined efforts of many minds. Conversely, he makes use of the image of inversion, of a building resting on air, to describe the French constitution, which had abandoned all it had inherited from the past and which was only "based" in some abstract "theory of a constitution" (8: 332). Because the French state is reconstituted "as often, and as much, and in as many ways as there are floating fancies or fashions," there can be "nothing stable in the modes of holding property, or exercising function, [that] could form a solid ground on which any parent could speculate in the education of his offspring, or in a choice of their future establishment in the world" (145-6). Without the guarantee of order based on the acceptance of principles derived from the past, there could be no incentive to acquire or accumulate wealth and property or even to invest in an education. This stability requires the connection with the past, argues Burke, which is to be found in custom, habit and prejudice, as well as in laws and the principles of inheritance. Without these organic ties to the past, he laments, there would be no connection between men in society, and men "would be little better than the flies of a summer" (145). In the final paragraphs of the *Reflections* Burke once again draws a comparison between the firm and substantial British system of government and its theoretic counterpart: "standing on the firm ground of the British constitution, let us be satisfied

to admire rather than attempt to follow in their desperate flights the aeronauts of France" (8: 293). Paine makes reference to this image, and countered Burke's attempt to ground the *Reflections* in the collective life of the nation by dismissing his adversary's verbal dexterity: "He has [. . .] mounted in the air like a balloon, to draw the eyes of the multitude from the ground they stand upon" (75). By exposing Burke as a mere rhetorician, Paine cuts Burke free from the ground to which he had audaciously laid claim. Paine was aware that Burke's appropriation of the firm ground was also meant to deprive the radicals of their claim to connect to the population at large, and so reminded his readers that Burke had prostituted his talent in the service of the nobility, while he, Paine, had earned his literary reputation through his own labours (*The Rights of Man* 51, 124, 219, 270-1).¹¹

Burke frequently claimed to sympathise with the poor, to be their true, rather than theoretical, advocate, and his rhetoric does sometimes place him on the side of the poor.¹² In his public speeches on the Revolution, however, Burke consistently emphasises that the first requirement of all civil society is that the poor know their place and respect the principle order which places others above them. In a passage in the *Reflections* that illustrates this point nicely, Burke argues that the existence of a non-labouring class is necessary to the economy. The income of the capitalist, he says, is the surplus produced by labour, and his expenditure on luxury provides the demand which keeps the economy moving: "this idleness is itself the spring of labour; this repose the spur to industry" (8: 209). On this basis, Burke also defends the existence

of the Catholic monks, whose property had recently been abolished by the French constitution:

[The monks] are as usefully employed [in their present cloistered state] as if they worked from dawn to dusk in the innumerable servile, degrading, unseemly, unmanly, and often most unwholesome and pestiferous occupations, to which by the social oeconomy so many wretches are inevitably doomed. If it were not generally pernicious to disturb the natural course of things, and to impede, in any degree, the great wheel of circulation which is turned by the strangely directed labour of these unhappy people, I should be infinitely more inclined forcibly to rescue them from their miserable industry, than violently to disturb the tranquil repose of monastic quietude. (*Writings* 8: 209)

The rhetoric here dovetails with the defence of a capitalist society in the *Scarcity* tract, the wheel of circulation being a metaphor for the self-regulating economy (9: 127).

The passage seems to concede somewhat imprudently that the poor suffer inordinately, and Freeman even suggests that Burke's language in this passage sides with "forcible rescue" (177-8). The key to the rhetoric of the passage, however, is that it shows Burke, the political realist, subordinating his humanity to his economic sense, his compassion to his honesty: he would rescue the poor if he could, but this would be to the disadvantage not only of the rich, but also, in the long term, of the poor themselves.

By preserving the ancient principles of subordination, loyalty and honour, the French nation might have enjoyed all the benefits of a free and prosperous nation.

Above all, he writes:

you would have had a protected, satisfied, laborious, and obedient people, taught to seek and to recognise the happiness that is to be found by virtue in all conditions; in which consists the true moral equality of mankind, and not in that monstrous fiction, which by inspiring false ideas and vain expectations into men destined to travel in the obscure walk of laborious life, serves only to aggravate and embitter that real inequality, which it never can remove; and which the order of civil life establishes as much for the benefit of those whom it must leave in an humble state, as those whom it is able to exalt to a condition more splendid, but not more happy. (8: 87-8).

While the human condition made it necessary that the great majority of mankind must continue to earn their bread by hard physical labour, the rights of man would encourage the ambition of even the lowest workers to escape this curse. A few paragraphs further on, Burke elaborates on the psychology behind this view when he discusses the composition of the National Assembly by "inferior, unlearned, mechanical, merely instrumental members of the [legal] profession" (93). Men of humble origin, suddenly elevated to power, would become intoxicated with their new situation: "Who could conceive that men who are habitually meddling, daring, subtle, active, of litigious dispositions and unquiet minds, would easily fall back into their old condition of obscure contention and laborious, low, unprofitable chicane?" (93-4). In

his *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*, written a few months after the *Reflections*, Burke offers the same psychological explanation for the attractiveness of the doctrine of equality:

The people of France, almost generally, have been taught to look for other resources than those which can be derived from order, frugality, and industry [. . .]. Besides this, the retrograde order of society has something flattering to the disposition of mankind. The life of adventurers, gamesters, gipsies, beggars, and robbers, is not unpleasant. It requires restraint to keep men from falling into that habit. The shifting tides of fear and hope, the flight and pursuit, the peril and escape, the alternate famine and feast, of the savage and the thief, after a time, render all course of slow, steady, progressive, unvaried occupation, and the prospect only of a limited mediocrity at the end of long labour, to the last degree tame, languid, and insipid. Those who have been once intoxicated with power, and have derived any kind of emolument from it [. . .] never can willingly abandon it. (8: 301)

Along the same lines, again, Burke talks in his *Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* (1791) of the novelty of the French constitution and the seduction by the "specious, untried, ambiguous prospects of new advantages [that] recommended themselves to the spirit of adventure, which more or less prevails in every mind" (15). And again in his *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies* (1793), he writes that it is impossible that men from the lowest class should return to "become humble, peaceable, laborious, and useful members of society" (*Writings* 8: 496). The men from humble and laborious

occupations are the obscure but firm foundations on which society is built; however, such men are easily seduced from their boring and laborious existence by the promise of a revolutionary change in their circumstances. Ideological or physical restraint was necessary, then, to the stability of society.¹³

To recapitulate: over and again Burke insists that the French theorists build without a foundation (8: 305, 313, 315, 330). The rights of man, atheism, and so on were fit principles on which to plan the destruction of authority, but they provided no basis upon which to erect order, morality, submission to laws. A stable and solid government could not be constructed with the instruments and materials appropriate to the work of rebellion. Encouraging men to earn their living through confiscation rather than through steady, though unfulfilling, labour, the revolutionaries would find that the elements which had supplied the foundation of the original edifice now desired to be the ornaments of the new building. Moreover, Burke insinuates that just as the theorists of the rights of man had forgotten that society's foundations are the continued ideological subordination of the labouring poor, so, by that token, these intellectuals are themselves guilty of avoiding the hard mental labour of engaging with the real difficulties of material life. By holding out to the populace the prospect of escaping from the curse of labour, they elude the arduous and obscure work of laying foundations for the easier and more immediately observable work of pulling down. In an associated argument, as I shall now detail, Burke also claimed that the organic British constitution was sounder than the theoretical French one, in part, at least,

because the former had resulted from a more earnest and laborious engagement of the mind with difficulty.

In a crucial passage in the *Reflections*, Burke argues that the British method of transmitting political institutions--the form of government and the rights of subjects--is modeled by way of a "philosophic analogy" with the British manner of transmitting property (84). Burke calls this "working after the pattern of nature," or "preserving the method of nature in the conduct of the state," presumably because it is "natural" to pass on one's property to one's offspring. The British political system, therefore, is "placed in just correspondence and symmetry with the order of the world" (84-5). The organic British constitution, which retains and adapts the past, is contrasted with the theoretical French constitution: "The very idea of the fabrication of a new government is enough to fill us with disgust and horror. We wished at the period of the Revolution [of 1688], and do now wish, to derive all we possess as *an inheritance from our forefathers*. Upon that body and stock of inheritance we have taken care not to inoculate any cyon alien to the nature of the original plant" (81). Similarly, the freedom and rights of Englishmen are "a patrimony derived from their forefathers," rather than the fabrication of abstract theory (82). This is an important point, which Burke emphasises by repetition as well as by typography: "It has been the uniform policy of our constitution to claim and assert our liberties, as an *entailed inheritance* derived to us from our forefathers, and to be transmitted to our posterity" (83). In whatever they do or say, indeed, the British are always acting "as if in the presence of canonized forefathers" (85). Hence, as Bruce James Smith observes, Burke conceives of all

knowledge, too, as an inheritance (16). Burke constantly repeats that the most reliable guide to action in the present is habit and prejudice, the customary, pre-theoretical, knowledge of the past: "we continue to act on the early received, and uniformly continued sense of mankind" (142-3). The British, he says again, have wisely not despised "the patrimony of knowledge which was left to us by our forefathers," which has been the basis of all the improvements in the sciences and in the arts that Britain has contributed to the civilised world (150).¹⁴

Burke's representation of his own intellectual labour, also, is modeled by analogy with British political institutions, and, therefore, by analogy with the system of inheriting property. Burke characterises his own work as a political theorist as a collaboration with tradition, and implies that this is how all intellectual endeavour should proceed: "Political arrangement, as it is a work for social ends, is to be only wrought by social means. There mind must conspire with mind. Time is required to produce that union of minds which alone can produce all the good we aim at" (217). Burke readily admits the charge of gradualism. The work is so gradual, in fact, as to be invisible: it is one of the benefits of "a method in which time is one of the assistants, that its operation is slow, and in some cases almost imperceptible" (217). If the architect must exercise caution when destroying and building with "brick and timber," then circumspection is still more of a virtue when the materials are "sentient beings" (217). This method of collaboration--co-operation with the past, with the meditations of dead men--allows Burke to be able to claim authority to speak for tradition and for what he refers to as "the body" of the English people. Hence, he writes: "I do not aim

at singularity. I give you opinions which have been accepted amongst us from very early times to this moment, with a continued and general approbation, and which indeed are so worked into my mind, that I am unable to distinguish what I have learned from others from the results of my own meditation" (149). Burke's theory of influence is, at the same time, an account of legitimate intellectual labour, an account which would prohibit the adoption of radical ideas on the grounds that they could not have been the products of the accumulated wisdom of ages.

The French constitution, Burke maintains, values only novelty. One of Burke's consistent themes is that the revolutionaries had despised everything bequeathed to them from the past and had acted, in consequence, as if they had everything to begin anew. Instead of preserving and adapting what they found in the state and in society as they already existed, they had cast everything out: "We have discovered, it seems, that all which the boasted wisdom of our ancestors has laboured to bring to perfection for six or seven centuries, is nearly all altogether matched in six or seven days, at the leisure hours and sober intervals of Citizen Tom Paine" (9: 82). If Burke's own intellectual labour, his own method of composition, is constructed by analogy with the very political system he wants to defend, this is because his method is a critique of the values implicit in the procedures of the new composition, and of the political systems that are allegedly the products of such a foreshortened approach to mental work.¹⁵

The work of theory is repeatedly made to look like a kind of laziness, a short cut which claims to be able to stand comparison with the long, accumulated labour of centuries; Burke's thinking, by contrast, is identified with the endeavour of "time"

itself. As David Simpson has argued: "instead of being a ready and easy way that speeds up mental and social processes and economizes on human energy, Burke's 'method' is almost identical with the slow passage of recorded time" (*Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt Against Theory* 58). Institutional change of any kind, in Burke's view, has to occur by a slow evolution, building on what is established and discarding only after long deliberation, and the mental work of political arrangement should mimic this glacial movement of social processes. Theory, by contrast, is a kind of intellectual laziness that takes the line of least resistance, eluding, though not finally escaping, the difficulties of working in the real world. In the *Reflections*, for instance, Burke censures the members of the French Assembly for the sloppiness of their intellectual effort:

Their purpose everywhere seems to have been to evade and slip aside from *difficulty* [. . .]. They get nothing by it. Commencing their labours on a principle of sloth, they have the common fortune of slothful men. The difficulties which they rather had eluded than escaped, meet them again in their course; they multiply and thicken on them; they are involved, through a labyrinth of confused detail, in an industry without limit, and without direction; and, in conclusion, the whole of their work becomes feeble, vitious, and insecure. (8: 215)

Wrestling with difficulty is not to be evaded, says Burke, for it "obliges us to an intimate acquaintance with our object [. . .]. It will not suffer us to be superficial"

(215). The French, on the contrary, have "a degenerate fondness for tricking short-cuts, and little fallacious fallacies" (215).

Already in the *Reflections*, Burke had censured the tactics of the revolutionaries as "criminal means" which offered a "shorter-cut to the object than through the highway of moral virtues" (132-3). In 1790, Burke was confident that such short methods would eventually backfire on the agents themselves. In 1796, in the *Second of the Letters on a Regicide Peace*, Burke's criticism of criminal methods is tinted with a grudging admiration. He again accuses the French revolutionary state of discovering labour-saving methods: they had "found the short cut to the productions of Nature, while others in pursuit of them, are obliged to wind through the labyrinth of a very intricate state of society. They seize upon the fruit of the labour; they seize upon the labourer himself" (9: 288-9). Now the Jacobinal system is not only a way evading difficulty, but evidence of enterprise; the French constitution has its benefits, that is, in the efficiency of its design (287). Nevertheless, in seizing on the fruits of others' labour, the French legislators are still guilty of wanting to live off something other than the resources of their own labours.

The value of honest industry, the ethos of industriousness, underpins Burke's critique of radical mental activity. Unsurprisingly, therefore, the exertions of the sagacious politician are compared to that of the skilled workman: "There are moments in the fortunes of states when particular men are called to make improvements by great mental exertion [. . .]. A politician, to do great things, looks for a *power*, what our workmen call a *purchase*; and if he finds that power, in politics as in mechanics he

cannot be at a loss to apply it" (8: 206). It behooves modern politicians not to discard materials and instruments which they find ready to hand. Burke avers that the monastic institution was such a power that might have been used to great good. But instead of directing the mental and bodily labour of the monks and the wealth and resources of religion for public benefit, the fruits of the confiscation had been simply sold and destroyed (206-7). For Burke, it was an unforgivable profligacy to destroy a power growing in nature. He makes a similar point in the *Third Letter on the Regicide Peace*, where he argues that the desire for acquisition--or, the greed of the capitalist--was the principle of all prosperity, and a natural power that the statesman might direct to public benefit, rather than, say, censure or subdue (9: 347-50). The French politicians are unable to act with the requisite political acumen because they do not understand their trade and are "destitute of mental funds" (8: 207). He is not even deserving of the name of statesmen, says Burke, who "having obtained the command and direction of such a power as existed in the wealth, the discipline, and habits of such corporations, as those which you have rashly destroyed, cannot find a way of converting it to the great and lasting benefit of his country" (207). Although the work ethic is made to support Burke's critique of other intellectuals, I would stress that Burke's appropriation of the virtues of labour for his own thought is, as Paine realised, a rhetorical accomplishment. As I will now argue, Burke models his own intellectual work on what is, in essence, an aristocratic model of intellectual activity.

Burke continually refers to the organic nature of the British constitution, and identifies it with his own labour. Innovation, by contrast, was not to be relied upon,

because the theorists had not laboriously absorbed the accumulated wisdom of the past in the way that Burke, for example, had done; instead, they had rejected all opinion, all custom, and all prejudice (8: 138). In *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, Burke reiterates his view that the British Constitution was the result of collected wisdom: it had "not been struck out at an heat by a set of presumptuous men [. . .]. It is the result of the thoughts of many minds in many ages" (113). Just as the British constitution is a complicated and multi-faceted work that could not be the result of one mind or one age, so, Burke affirms, its advantages cannot be appreciated by "superficial understandings" (113). True political wisdom requires intelligent men to know the limits of their own understanding and when to avail themselves of the accumulated intelligence of the past: without "the foregone studies of men reputed intelligent and learned we shall be always beginners" (113-14). Pace Simpson, it is Burke's method of proceeding which now looks like one that "economizes on human energy" and provides a short cut to political wisdom (*Romanticism, Nationalism, and the Revolt Against Theory* 58). Collaboration with tradition, in other words, is like walking on a beaten track, and allows Burke to avoid unnecessary labour. If Burke distinguishes his own political writing and thinking from radical speculators by invoking the past in the form of venerable predecessors whose legacy he is protecting and extending, the presence of other minds vouching for Burke's own political wisdom might, at the same time, render problematic the very labour, *qua* labour, in which Burke is engaged. It is difficult to see how Burke can measure the value of his own labours, for example, if he cannot distinguish what he has learned from others "from

the results of [his] own meditations" (8: 149). What Burke values, in placing foundation above innovation, is not hard work, but a continued line of descent.

John Barrell has argued that the eighteenth-century discourse of civic humanism legitimates the possession of political authority of the traditional landed elite by claiming that that "political authority is rightly exercised by those capable of thinking in general terms; which usually means those capable of producing abstract ideas" (Barrell, *The Birth of Pandora* 41). To develop the ability to generalise, "a man must occupy a place in the social order where he has no need to devote his life to supporting himself," where he has no narrow or self-serving professional interests, and where he does not form an experience of the world primarily through the performance of manual labour (42). Generality was equated with comprehensiveness and disinterestedness. To have an occupation of any kind limited one's outlook; the pursuit of "any specific profession, trade, or occupation might occlude [one's] view of society as a whole" (*English Literature in History* 33; *The Birth of Pandora* 42). This view, in effect, justified the restriction of political office to those, primarily gentlemen of landed property, with a large enough unearned income to allow them leisure to reflect and time to devote themselves to public life (*The Birth of Pandora* 51). As the century progressed, the credibility of the gentleman's claim to special status became increasingly undermined, as Barrell has made clear, by the sense of society as a complex and diversified organism, unavailable to the single comprehensive gaze. In particular, political economy, the discourse of the division of labour, countered the landed gentleman's claim to disinterest, by re-evaluating both "labour" and "interest,"

society was portrayed by Adam Smith, for example, as a collective of specialised labourers, each pursuing their own special interests, the outcome of which was generally beneficial to all (*English Literature in History* 21-5; *The Birth of Pandora* xiv-xv; *The Wealth of Nations* 1: 10-36).

As De Bruyn has demonstrated, despite this challenge to the comprehensive view, Burke, among others, "remained committed to finding modes of representation that reaffirmed the gentleman's intellectual and political authority" (130). We can point to an remarkable sentence in *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, for instance, where Burke argues that a "true natural aristocracy is not a separate interest in the state" (129). This class possesses qualities which can only be the result of a life of leisure:

To be bred in a place of estimation; to see nothing low and sordid from one's infancy; to be taught to respect oneself; to be habituated to the censorial inspection of the public eye; to look early to public opinion; to stand upon such elevated ground as to be enabled to take a large view of the wide-spread and infinitely diversified combinations of men and affairs in a large society; to have *leisure* to read, to reflect, to converse; To be enabled to draw the court and attention of the wise and learned wherever they are found; To be habituated to armies to command and obey; To be taught to despise danger in the pursuit of honour and duty; To be formed to the greatest degree of vigilance, foresight, and circumspection, in a state of things in which no fault is committed with impunity, and the slightest mistakes draw on the most ruinous consequences--

To be led to a guarded and regulated conduct, from a sense that you are considered as an instructor of your fellow-citizens in their highest concerns, and that you act as a reconciler between God and man--To be employed as an administrator of the law and justice, and to be thereby amongst the first benefactors to mankind--To be a professor of high science, or of liberal and ingenuous art--To be amongst rich traders, who from their success are presumed to have sharp and vigorous understandings, and to possess the virtues of diligence, order, constancy, and regularity, and to have cultivated an habitual regard to commutative justice--These are the circumstances of men who form what I should call a *natural* aristocracy, without which there is no nation. (129-30)

Although Burke's ruling class is opened up to exceptional men from some professional fields--it can contain some lawyers, learned professors, clergymen, rich traders--the burden of the passage is to impress the reader with the idea that a life of comparative leisure is essential to fit a mind for the highest office. Burke's language in the *Reflections*, for example, often suggests that statesman ought to possess this aristocratic outlook, and that tradesmen or professional men are disqualified from political office on this account: "It cannot escape observation, that when men are too much confined to professional and faculty habits, and, as it were, inveterate in the recurrent employment of that narrow circle, they are rather disabled than qualified for whatever depends on the knowledge of mankind [. . .] on a comprehensive connected view of the various complicated external and internal interests which go to the

formation of that multifarious thing called a state" (8: 95, 100-101, 291). It may be, as De Bruyn argues, that Burke saw himself embodying the political ideal of the gentleman "that the hereditary political leadership of his country was, to his mind, increasingly abandoning" (159). Indeed, the long sentence from *An Appeal from the New to the old Whigs*, quoted above, may be intended to perform the very quality--"a large view of the wide-spread and infinitely diversified combinations of men and affairs"--it somewhat laboriously describes.

Elsewhere, Burke even more explicitly argues that leisure, even idleness, is one of the conditions necessary for intellectual practice. While he accuses the leaders of the National Assembly of intellectual sloth, he also claims, paradoxically, that that the mischief which the National Assembly had done was the result of too much labour. Freedom from the necessity of labour is a prerequisite for the disinterested judgment of a true statesman:

In England we *cannot* work so hard as Frenchmen. Frequent relaxation is necessary to us [. . .]. At present, this your disposition to labour is rather encreased than lessened [. . .]. This continued unremitted effort of the members of your Assembly, I take to be one among the causes of the mischief they have done. They who always labour, can have no true judgment. You never give yourselves time to cool. You can never survey, from its proper point of sight, the work you have finished, before you decree its final execution. You never go into the country, soberly, and dispassionately to observe the effect of your measures on their objects [. . .]. These are among the effects of unremitted

labour, when men exhaust their attention, burn out their candles, and are left in the dark. (8: 334-5)

Burke recommends retirement to the country perhaps because, as Barrell observes, "the town, buried in smoke and divided by interest, inhibits a clear and disinterested vision of the world" (*English Literature in History* 60-1). In any case, we can safely assume that Burke's recommendation to "frequent relaxation" is not intended for all labourers alike, certainly not for those who, subjected to "the common doom" of mankind, must labour both to provide their own daily bread and to support the physical life of the higher classes. Rest from labour is here recommended as necessary only to intellectual workers, specifically to statesmen, whose attention might be taxed by overwork.

Burke is torn between two ideological paradigms of intellectual activity, we can summarise, both of which he puts in the service of critique of radical intellectuals: a bourgeois one derived from political economy and an aristocratic one derived from civic humanism. On one hand, Burke sees mental work as akin to any other kind of toil--our common doom--and censures the members of the French Assembly, from within the norms of the work ethic, for evading the difficult labour of political and social arrangement. On the other hand, he sees these same intellectual workers as exempted from the unremitting cycle of labour, and suggests that intellectual labour cannot be effective without leisure, the relaxation of frequent rural residence.¹⁶ The problem, as I have argued, is that Burke models his own political work on an analogy with the political and social system of hereditary privilege that he is trying to defend,

while, at the same time, he is unwilling to give up, for the purposes of critique of his intellectual adversaries, the resources of the language of labour, derived from the ethos of the class of men to whom he belonged both by social origin and ideological inclination. The difficult, one could say impossible, task Burke attempts, through the representation of his own mental labour, is to make privilege seem more laborious, more deserving, than mere industry and talent.

The bourgeois character was, for Burke, active and energetic, and, as Kramnick has argued, tends to be described in his writings by adjectives such as bold, adventurous, independent, enterprising, spirited, ambitious, assertive, and industrious. The nobility, on the other hand, were passive, and characterised by the opposite terms: listless timid, idle, irresolute, languid, indolent, complacent, and supine. Throughout his career, as Kramnick demonstrates, Burke saw these two forces contending in the social order (Kramnick 109, 121-2). In the *Reflections*, for example, Burke stresses that every country must make a place for its talents and abilities in its highest offices, but that property must be represented in government in disproportion to its numerical weight in society. Because ability is a "vigorous and active principle" while property is "sluggish, inert, and timid," property must be protected from envy and rapacity by a massive representation in the state (8: 101-2). Hence, it is right, he says, that both the house of Peers and, to a great extent, the Commons, are dominated by landed aristocracy. At the very worst, says Burke, the large property owners serve as "the ballast in the vessel of the commonwealth" (102). The property of the great

landowners forms a "natural rampart about the lesser properties in all their gradations" (102). The security of great masses of property in the hands of a few noble men secures all property in principle. Although every commonwealth must give a "due and adequate" representation to its talents and abilities, because ability is so vigorous and assertive advancement ought to be made difficult: "the road to eminence and power, from obscure condition, ought not to be made too easy, nor a thing too much of course" (101). The principle of property must be protected from the ambitious politicking of the talented, by making advancement as difficult as possible for the latter.

The opposed principles of passivity and activity also mark the respective national characters of the British and the French. The British, according to the radicals' depiction of them, are, says Burke, conservative because they are complacent: "I know that we are supposed a dull sluggish race, rendered passive by finding our situation tolerable; and prevented by a mediocrity of freedom from ever attaining to its full perfection" (106). In a much-cited passage, Burke turns complacency into a conservative political virtue: "Because half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate chink, while thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew the cud and are silent, pray do not imagine, that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field" (136). Dullness makes the British cherish their prejudices and renders them averse to innovation in politics: "Thanks to our sullen resistance to innovation, thanks to the cold sluggishness of our national character, we still bear the stamp of our forefathers"

(137). The suggestion is that the pre-eminence of the principle of property in their political constitution accounts for the conservatism of the British national character, their resistance to untried experiments in politics. The British people tend to be sluggish and dull, because they are animated, so to speak, by the inert principle of property that dominates in the British state.

These virtues could be a liability, however. A theme that would appear regularly in the texts of Burke's last years is that while obedient labourers--passive, sober and contented--were the solid ground on which society was built, the same characteristics made those men uncommitted--languid and tame--in the defence of the nation. Dullness, indolence and inertia are, on one hand, the qualities that inoculate Britain from revolutionary contagion. On the other hand, Burke fears, that they will prove inadequate for the task of resisting the demonic revolutionary spirit. From 1791 Burke's project was to create zeal for the status quo, to inspire the same enthusiasm for the defence of the old as for the proliferation of novelty. In this endeavour his adversaries are not radical intellectuals, but the torpid and complacent political and social establishment of England, who, Burke believed, were slow to recognise the extent of the danger posed by the new revolutionary state and the subversive ideals it tirelessly propagated. Interestingly, even though the identity of his political opponents has changed, Burke deploys the same vocabulary of labour against his more august antagonists that supported his criticism of the radicals.

The security and prosperity which the British had, thanks to the constitutional settlement of 1688, enjoyed for more than a century, was a source of discontent

among some and of complacency in others. In his *Letter to William Elliot*, Burke argued that the germ of revolution lay in the prosperity of France. Security had bred, in one part of society, "laxity and debility," while encouraging, in the other part, "bold spirits and dark designs" (9: 39). In Britain, too, the security and general prosperity that the nation had enjoyed during the eighteenth century contained its own dangers. Hence, in the *Reflections*, Burke argues that security and prosperity were not enough to excite the imagination of intellectuals like Richard Price: "There must be a great change of scene, there must be a magnificent stage effect; there must be a grand spectacle to rouse the imagination, grown torpid with the lazy enjoyment of sixty years security, and the still unanimating repose of public prosperity" (*Writings* 8: 115). The same phrase "lazy enjoyment" occurs in Burke's attack on the Duke of Bedford in *A Letter to a Noble Lord*: the aristocracy's sense of entitlement leads to the "lazy enjoyment of undisturbed possessions" (9: 175). Burke fears that, as it tends to inertia, property also tends to complacency, "supine security," and a lack of zeal in its own defence (*Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* 108-9).

If the British people are in general passive, the French, after 1789, were--like the meritocratic principle that animated the new Republic--bold and active. Burke characterised the Jacobins as zealous, energetic, enterprising, talented men attacking the inert and timid privileged order (Kramnick 145). "There is no vigour anywhere," wrote Burke in 1792, "except the distempered vigour and energy of France. That country has but too much life in it, when everything around is so disposed to tameness and languor" (8: 391). And in 1793 Burke listed the "innumerable defects" of the

Jacobins--men of no rank, full of levity, arrogance, and presumption, without morals or prudence--only to conclude that they had one quality: "but that one thing is worth a thousand--they have energy" (480). Here, where Burke is trying to animate the zeal of the British government for a protracted war against France, the dull solidity and passivity of the British character is a liability. The principle which preserves domestic order does not secure the nation from a threat from abroad. While Burke wants the British people to remain in their contented docile state--obedient, tractable and laborious--so that they might continue to cherish their prejudices, he also wants to fire them with the same energy as the Jacobins possessed in order that they may be better equipped to resist the enemy.

The British Constitution, Burke lamented in 1791, is at best "coldly tolerated" while the French is "rapturously praised" (*An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* 96). Four years later, in the *Letter to William Elliot* of 1795, Burke insisted that the British constitution too must have its "warm advocates and passionate defenders" and not merely "heavy, discontented acquiescence" (9: 40, 223). The defence of the old order, he feared, was "cold, unimpassioned, dejected, melancholy" (110-11). Opposition to the French system must bear some resemblance to the force it exerted, Burke maintained (290). The republican spirit that animated France and the French faction in England must be matched by a "republican" spirit in defence of monarchy (41-2). But Burke does not explain how the old order will inspire the same zeal as the new, built as it was to reflect and encourage the opposite virtues of security of property, slow, steady labour, and cud-chewing docility.¹⁷ The energy of the Jacobins

derived from the same revolutionary principles that they had enshrined in the new constitution of their state: "We have not considered as we ought the dreadful energy of a State, in which the property has nothing to do with the Government, [. . .] in which the property is in complete subjection, and where nothing rules but the mind of desperate men" (289). France was formidable because of its spirit and its principles, which gave the Jacobins the full use of their native capacities; the Jacobins were superior to the British, in Burke's sober evaluation, "in ability, in dexterity, in the distinctness of their views" (225, 266).

Within the terms of labouring subjectivity, Burke castigated the radical intellectuals as lazy; at the same time, it is the industry and zeal of the Jacobins--their energy and ambition--that is most threatening. By the same logic, the obedience and contentment that Burke claimed to admire and venerate in the British character were sources of anxiety to him, since these same characteristics seemed to make the British acquiesce in their own defeat. The tensions in Burke's rhetoric were given a concise expression in a number of paradoxical descriptive phrases. In the *Reflections*, for instance, he accuses the revolutionaries of avoiding honest labour, but of being zealous, restless and industrious in the pursuit of their ambitions; in all their activities, he writes, the French politicians are governed by a "lazy but restless disposition which loves sloth but hates quiet" (8: 216). Again, in *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, Burke says that the British people, both in Parliament and out of doors, will sometimes acquiesce, through insufficient attention or decision, to political schemes they would normally have opposed, and that the nation will, therefore, be lost by an

"activity of inertness" (97). Or, in yet another paradoxical formulation that encapsulates the contradictions in Burke's rhetoric of labour, he describes the disposition of the nobility whose idle imaginations have been seduced by the revolutionaries as "the over-laboured lassitude of those who have nothing to do" (8: 152).¹⁸

It was the responsibility of the British government, Burke believed, to inspire a decent, contented, but dangerously complacent people with enthusiasm for the war (9: 236). Unfortunately, the government had been unable to kindle zeal in the people because they themselves were "cold as ice," were "flat and languid, feeble and evasive" (9: 229). The way to meet the enemy, Burke urged in his *Remarks on the Policy of the Allies*, was with energy and vigour, and not with doubts and fears, nor with "a languid, uncertain hesitation [. . .] which never sees a difficulty but to yield to it, or at best to evade it" (8: 480). This passage may be compared to the one, cited earlier, in which Burke accuses the French theorists of trying to "evade and slip aside from difficulty" (8: 215). Even though the identity of his adversary has changed, from the slothful French politicians to the flat and feeble Pitt government, he uses the same terms to castigate these different opponents; in both cases, in contrast to his shiftless enemies Burke's counter-labours are figured as arduous physical effort. On more than one occasion, for example, Burke would point out to the nobility the irony of a situation in which he alone seemed desirous of upholding the order of things under which they prospered: "I am not Hercules enough to uphold those orbs which the Atlases of the world are so desirous of shifting from their weary shoulders. What can be done against

the magnanimous resolution of the great to accomplish the degradation and the ruin of their own character and situation?" (9: 37). What was needed, then, as illustrated by Burke himself, was a "sweat of the mind," a readiness on behalf of the great and powerful part of the British nation to do their share of suffering in the national war effort.

In the text with which I began this chapter, the third of the *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, Burke contends that the efforts of the Pitt Government to negotiate a peace with France were mistaken in intent and must inevitably be unsuccessful in the execution. The advances of the British were misguided, Burke argued, because there could never be a treaty, or even a dialogue, between the two parties, as the French directory rejected out of court any of the conventional rules of international diplomacy between nations and did not even respect the principle of national sovereignty. The aim of the directory was not to maintain a balance of power, but rather to encourage a universal revolution in all nations on the model of the French one. The purpose of the French Assembly's foreign diplomacy, in short, was the subversion of all legitimate national governments (9: 340). Moreover, the diplomacy of the British government in suing for peace could not be successful because it had pursued too eagerly the cessation of hostilities; too anxious to secure peace at any price, the Pitt ministry merely succeeded in communicating to the French Assembly its willingness to submit to almost any additional humiliation rather than risk the continuation of aggression (301).

The *Third Letter on the Regicide Peace* was written in large part to answer the question "whether the inability of the country to prosecute the war, did necessitate a submission to the indignities and the calamities of a Peace with the Regicide Power" (9: 352). The only excuse which might be admitted as a legitimate reason for following what Burke calls the "mendicant diplomacy" of peace at any price is that such a policy was founded on "absolute necessity" (344). This defence, says Burke, at least deserves consideration; however, he then makes a distinction between moral and physical necessity:

moral necessity is not like metaphysical or even physical. In that category, it is a word of loose signification, and conveys different ideas to different minds. To the low-minded the slightest necessity becomes an invincible necessity [. . .]. But when the necessity pleaded is not in the nature of things, but in the vices of him who alleges it, the whining tones of common-place beggarly rhetorick, produce nothing but indignation; because they indicate a desire of keeping up a dishonourable existence, without utility to others, and without dignity to itself; because they aim at obtaining the dues of labour without industry; and by frauds would draw from the compassion of others, what men ought to owe to their own spirit and their own exertions. (344-5)

According to Burke, the British government could not attribute its unwillingness to prosecute the war to the absence of resources--either material or moral--within the British nation (345-6). In an analysis of the economic health of the country, Burke claims to demonstrate its physical ability to sustain the economic burdens of a

prolonged war. For example, the loan collected by open subscription in December 1796 showed, according to Burke, that the British people lacked neither martial spirit, nor material wealth, nor confidence in the Government (345-6). All that was needed in order to prosecute the war successfully was an adequate leadership. The government's appeal to necessity as the grounds for making peace with France was, therefore, simply an attempt to reduce its own culpability, for its lack of zeal for the war was an abandonment of the proper labours of statesmanship. We can note that Burke criticises the government's poltroonery here for the same reasons he criticises the plans to relieve the labouring poor in this same letter: the government's excuses solicit compassion in order to obtain what should be procured only by their own exertions; the "beggarly rhetoric" excites pity only in order to evade labour.

A similar distinction between the moral and physical worlds is made in *A Letter to William Elliot*, in which Burke is trying to convince his contemporaries that the British system of liberty and government would not perish under its own weakness but only by the neglect of those in authority. Here, the distinction is made in order to suggest that the analogy between political states and human bodies is inapt, and may simply be a cover-up for intellectual cowardice and laziness:

I am not of the opinion that the race of men, and the commonwealth they create, like the bodies of individuals, grow effete and languid and bloodless, and ossify by the necessities of their own conformation, and the fatal operation of longevity and time. The analogies between bodies natural and politick, though they may some times illustrate arguments, furnish no argument of

themselves. They are but too often used under the colour of a specious philosophy, to find apologies for the despair of laziness and pusillanimity, and to excuse the want of all manly efforts, when the exigencies of our country call for them the more loudly. (40-1)

As in the previous excerpt, Burke identifies zeal for the cause with a willingness to labour against difficulty, and he attacks the lack of zeal of the British leaders who invent excuses rather than engage in “manly” industry. Specious arguments derived from false analogies manifest a desire to avoid hard labour, the sweat of the mind. As I will now suggest, however, with reference to *A Letter to a Noble Lord*, by these exacting standards, Burke himself is guilty of superficial reasoning and deceptive rhetoric when he defends his crown pension; thus he evinces his own desire to obtain the dues of labour without industry.

Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord* was published on 24 February 1796 in answer to criticism in both houses of parliament, during the previous year, of his acceptance of a crown pension. In 1794, Burke's political friends persuaded Pitt of the need to do something for Burke in his financial exigency. By August 1795 Burke's debts were estimated to have been around thirty thousand pounds. The initial idea was to procure for Burke a peerage, and Burke's son Richard canvassed Pitt to this effect. The King refused, however, and in lieu of this Burke was awarded an annual pension of 1,200 pounds, the maximum amount permitted under his own 1782 Civil List Act. In September 1795 his total pension was increased to 3,700 pounds per annum by an additional sum, paid out of the Crown's reserved revenue and, therefore not subject to

the restrictions imposed by the Act of 1782. While political pensions were often attacked for undermining the independence of thought essential to public service, criticism of Burke's pension was aggravated by other factors. To his critics Burke's acceptance of the pension clashed with the spirit at least of his earlier rhetoric against royal patronage in his *Speech on Oeconomical Reform*, and even sympathisers regretted that it had not been brought forward in the form of a parliamentary grant. It seemed to his detractors that the pension had been awarded by the Pitt ministry as a payment for Burke's propaganda against the French Revolution. Burke was especially incensed by attacks on him by two Foxite Whig peers in the House of Lords, John Russell, Duke of Bedford and James Maitland, Earl of Lauderdale. Bedford spoke in the Lords of "pensions of almost unparalleled profusion" which had been "lavished upon the avowed advocates of economy; nay upon the very man who had distinguished himself at one time as the rigid advocate of economy" (*Writings* 9: 9). In his defence, Burke concentrated his attack on the young and wealthy Bedford. Like the Duke of Norfolk whom Burke had already attacked in *A Letter to William Elliot*, Bedford and Lauderdale were examples of the rich nobility who had, from boredom or secret ambition, embraced radical ideas.¹⁹

To the reproach that his pension had been a pay-off for his anti-Gallic posture, Burke could with justice reply that at the time he wrote the *Reflections*, he did not know what the administration's stance on the revolution would be (*Correspondence* 8: 341). But in order to fully justify his pension Burke had to insist, in his reply to Bedford, on his merit, that his labours proved his worthiness: "If I am unworthy, the

Ministers are worse than prodigal" (9: 149). Burke contrasts his own industry with the Duke's aristocratic idleness and points out that Bedford owed his own fortune to the grants made by the tyrant Henry VIII to Russell's ancestor, the first Duke (9: 166-9, 164-5). Burke's ambivalence about aristocratic privilege is nowhere more evident than in *A Letter to a Noble Lord*. This was immediately remarked upon by Burke's contemporaries, such as Coleridge and John Thelwall, and has been noted by astute critics since. According to Kramnick, for example, it is here that Burke displays most openly his ideological ambivalence and most obviously affiliates himself with the social position and with the ideology of the Jacobins. Burke's attack on Bedford is uncomfortably reminiscent to the anti-aristocratic writing he deplored (5-6, 147-8). In a similar vein, Aers writes that *A Letter to a Noble Lord* becomes "both an attack on inherited privilege and wealth, the basis of aristocracy, and a defence, even a proud celebration, of specifically bourgeois values and an ethos whose outcome is a bourgeois meritocracy rather than an aristocratic order" (152). The problem for Burke is that by asserting his own industry, he declares his independence from patronage and, thereby, renounces the relationship of deference. As Reid summarises, Burke's difficulty in his *apologia* is that he has to assert his independence from patronage "without repudiating the social relationship of which it was a particular instance;" he must "acknowledge and disavow the relation of patronage (the relation confirmed by the grant of the pension)" (74, 89).²⁰

Looking back on his career as a politician, Burke emphasises that advancement and recognition have depended on his labour and his ability: "I have laboured hard to

earn what the noble Lords are generous enough to pay" (146).²¹ As in his earlier *Letter to William Elliot*, Burke represents himself as one of the obscure and laborious men: one of "poor outcasts of the plebeian race," a "scribbler" (33, 34). Unlike Bedford, who had been "swaddled, and rocked, and dandled into a Legislator," Burke has had to demonstrate his qualifications at "every step of my progress in life" (160).

Throughout the *Letter*, Burke contrasts Bedford's privilege with his own industry: "I cannot recognise in his few and idle years, the competence to judge of my long and laborious life" (149-50). Burke boasts of "a long life, spent with unexampled toil in the service of my country" (148), and, as he often does when he is emphasising his industriousness, he imagines his own labour as analogous to manual labour. Thus in his description of his plan for economic reform, he characteristically describes his endeavours in the vocabulary of physical exertion: "I heaved the lead every inch of the way" (157); his exertions have cost him "pains incredible" (151) and, he says, his "constitution sunk under [his] labour" (159). As in *A Letter to William Elliot*--where he is the Hercules holding up the hereditary system, while members of the nobility, the beneficiaries of the system, have abandoned their responsibilities--Burke points out the ironies of Bedford's attack on him. Lowly Burke had "omitted no exertion" to support the prejudices "which buoy up the ponderous mass of [Bedford's] nobility, wealth, and titles" (162). "I have strained every nerve," he adds, with perhaps justifiable exaggeration, "to keep the Duke of Bedford in that situation, which alone makes him my superior" (162).²²

Burke defends himself by claiming that he has merited, by having worked to achieve, the reward of a pension. Furthermore, Burke prides himself on the fact that he has always served his country by encouraging the abilities of others for the service of the nation: "I was always ready, to the height of my means [. . .] to forward those abilities which overpowered my own" (154). And, again: "I have on an hundred occasions, exerted myself with singular zeal to forward every man's even tolerable pretensions" (160). His economical reforms were not intended to abolish the award of state pensions to deserving recipients: "I did not dare to rob the nation of all funds to reward merit" (158). At the same time, Burke claims, somewhat paradoxically, that he has done all he could to discourage the radicals' "enquiries into the fortunes of those, who hold large portions of wealth without any apparent merit of their own" (162). Burke's merit, that is, consists both in his promotion of merit in others and in his defence of unmerited privilege. The defence of talent and merit sits uneasily with the defence of privilege, however, and Burke's self-defence continually crosses into an attack on aristocratic status. Hence, he points out the absurdity of the comparison between the proportion of service to reward in Bedford's case and his own: "Why will his Grace, by attacking me, force me reluctantly to compare my little merit with that which obtained from the Crown those prodigies of profuse donation by which he tramples on the mediocrity of humble and laborious individuals" (164-5). The comparison between them was ludicrous, for Bedford had no merits of his own: "My merits, whatever they are, are original and personal; his are derivative" (165). If the proportion between merit and reward had always been observed, Burke claims, "we

should not now have an overgrown Duke of Bedford to oppress the industry of humble men" (162).

Burke pursues the contrast between his own situation and Bedford's.

Accustomed to having everything provided for him, Bedford, says Burke, cannot even "comprehend the transaction he condemns. What I have obtained was the fruit of no bargain; the production of no intrigue; the result of no compromise; the effect of no solicitation" (148). The Duke's fortunes, on the other hand, were the outcome of a political intrigue; the Bedford fortunes, he remarks, originated in a grant to the first Duke of Bedford as a reward for "being a minion of Henry Eighth," a grant raised out of a capital engrossed by the dissolution of the monasteries (164, 166-7). However, it should be remembered that as a matter of historical accuracy, Burke's pension, too, was the result of political intercessions on his behalf: by Windham to Pitt, for example, and by Pitt to the King. When the Duke of Portland and his followers determined to give the Pitt administration their open support, provision for Burke in his old age was one of the points discussed when negotiations began (*Correspondence* 7: 550).

Richard Burke, in a letter to Windham, regretted that a peerage or a larger pension was not forthcoming, but asserted that his father would not, could not, from injured pride refuse whatever was offered: "some sacrifice of dignity must be made to ease" (*Correspondence* 8: 551). Finally, Burke's language, in a letter to Windham, implied that he considered himself in debt to the Pitt ministry for its generosity: "I am willing to take my part of it [this civil war of Europe] wherever you please. Tell this to Mr Pitt, and assure him, that he has not betrayed his master by recommending his bounty

to me" (*Correspondence* 8: 345). Burke's pension, then, quite clearly was the outcome of political compromise, of bargaining, and of solicitation. Indeed, as the *Letter to a Noble Lord* continues, Burke increasingly insists not on the difference between himself and Bedford, but for the analogy between their situations.

This is the curious strategy of the *Letter to a Noble Lord*. As the *Letter* progresses, Burke advances another argument, simultaneous with the first, in which he points out that his own situation is not essentially different from the Duke's, who also owed fortune to the grants conferred by the state (164). Most critics have commented on Burke's open affiliation with the Jacobins in his attack on Bedford. As De Bruyn notes, just as compelling is the correspondence between Burke and Bedford (41-2). Burke's "main concern," according to De Bruyn, "is to distance himself from the Duke" by arguing that "his subsidy is a legitimate recognition of merit and ability" (41-2). This is not quite correct, for Burke is trying to separate himself from Bedford and the radicals; if he insists too vigorously on his merit, to differentiate himself from Bedford, he only succeeds in identifying still more closely with the Jacobins. Burke is practically forced to confess that there is no proportion between political work and its rewards and that all state awards are arbitrary. What starts as a defence of his labourious life ends as an offer of a non-aggression pact: if Bedford ceases his attacks on Burke's pension, Burke will relinquish his inquiries into the origin of the Duke's fortunes.

Speaking of the persecution of the clergy, in the *Reflections*, Burke says that the revolutionaries had not been able to find any reason for their persecution in any

existing vices: "They find themselves obliged to rake into the histories of former ages (which they have ransacked with a malignant and profligate industry) for every instance of oppression and persecution which has been made by that body or in its favour, in order to justify, upon very iniquitous, because very illogical principles of retaliation, their own persecutions and their own cruelties" (8: 188-9). Burke continually points out the dangers of historical research. In the fourth of the *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, again, he writes that the Jacobin sympathizers in Britain attempted to justify the massacres of the regicides by "recourse to history; and found out all the recorded cruelties, that deform the annals of the world, in order that the massacres of the regicides might pass for a common event" (9: 106). Ironically, inquiring into the Duke's fortune is exactly what Burke does in the *Letter to a Noble Lord*: "Let us turn our eyes to history, in which great men have always a pleasure in contemplating the heroic origin of their house" (166). It is Burke, now, who rakes into the past in order to make a political point. This was the danger which John Thelwall, among others, was quick to catch in Burke's "mischievous pamphlet:" Burke had torn asunder, instead of protecting--as he claimed to be doing--"the venerable veil of prescription," and thus he had undermined "the foundations of hereditary property" (Thelwall 12, 11). The first "complete leveler," Burke had in effect represented all wealth and territorial possessions as "plunder and usurpation" (15).

The purpose of Burke's historical inquiry, of course, was to show that the award of his own pension was no more or less arbitrary than the way in which the Duke of Bedford acquired his own wealth and his own title. But by turning to history

to compare the origins of his own reward with those of his adversary, Burke, instead of establishing that both he and Bedford were equally meritorious or deserving, suggests that both grants were equally the outcome of arbitrary political favour. He effectively argues that any reward for political service depends to some extent on the colour of one's politics, and he more or less concedes that his own merit will not bear close scrutiny: "There will always be some difference of opinion in the value of political services" (9: 162). Even when he stresses most forcibly the value of his own services, Burke only manages to suggest that there is no obvious corollary between mental work and payment. "My exertions, whatever they have been, were such as no hopes of pecuniary reward could possibly excite; and no pecuniary compensations can possibly reward them. Between money and services of this kind [. . .] there is no common measurer" (150). If there is no way of accurately estimating the worth of political service, then all reward for that kind of work may be the fruits of political favour.

Burke's use of history is carefully calculated; it is a strategic move aimed at convincing the Duke of Bedford that it was better not to inquire at all into the proportion between political work and reward. It is not for nothing that Burke presents himself as a "reluctant" historian, for he demonstrates the danger for any kind of privilege of an historical or rational inquiry into its origins.²³ The invitation to Bedford to "turn our eyes to history" is a rhetorical one; it is not a proposal to engage in a collaborative historical inquiry, but a threat accompanied by the offer of an accord: "Let him remit his rigour on the disproportion between merit and reward in

others, and they will make no enquiry into the origin of his fortune" (169). As long as the "triple cord" of the realm--Monarchy, Lords, and Commons--endures, each pledging to ensure "each others being, and each others rights," then, concludes Burke, "we are all safe together--the high from the blights of envy and the spoliations of rapacity; the low from the iron hand of oppression and the insolent spurn of contempt" (172-3). The high, Bedford, and the low, Burke, are safe together in a conspiracy of silence. Hereditary property, transmissible wealth, ancestral titles, and state pensions all depended on the determination of the privileged to accept their indivisibility; each was as vulnerable as the next to rational inquiry and the strict proportioning of reward to merit. While Burke dismissed the view that his pension was the result of political bargain or compromise, he offers here what amounts to a peace treaty.

The mock overture to Bedford--"Let us turn our eyes to history, in which great men have always a pleasure in contemplating the heroic origin of their house"--has a further, unintended irony, since Burke presents himself as a champion of past lineages, and delights in contemplating the venerable origins of his own thought in the accumulated thoughts of previous writers and politicians. As I have argued, by placing himself in a long line of political thinkers whose legacy he is extending, Burke seems to imagine his own labours by an analogy with the hereditary (aristocratic) privilege he is protecting. That is to say, Burke, too, invokes an heroic past, in the form of the great minds of previous generations, that vouches for the legitimacy of his own thinking. Here again, in *A Letter to a Noble Lord*, although Burke draws on the terms labour, industry, and merit to defend his pension, the proposed analogy between

his own position and Bedford's appears to construct his mental labour more on the model of aristocratic privilege.

Mary Wollstonecraft, James Mackintosh, and Tom Paine all paid tribute to, even as they disparaged, Burke's remarkable facility for papering over weak arguments by rhetorical effects. As I discussed in my introductory chapter, Burke's audacious rhetorical strategy, of pulling the ground from under the feet of his radical adversaries by claiming to have a closer connection than they to the material life of the nation, has been repeated many times since. It is worth observing, therefore, just how unstable Burke's rhetoric is. Burke begins his reply to Bedford by positing his own work as analogous to arduous physical work. He ends by proposing a treaty. In admitting the analogy between his situation and Bedford's, Burke seems to acknowledge the inadequacy of the initial analogy. The analogy between mental and manual labour, through which he tries to make his labours convincing, is revealed as nothing more than a rhetorical device, even a false analogy, which Burke utilises merely to distinguish himself from his opponents and to defend his pension as the fair reward for work rendered. Applying to Burke his own unforgiving criteria--criteria which he used to censure the French revolutionary theorists and their British admirers, to upbraid languid government ministers, and to scold supine hereditary peers--this rhetoric is an index of his desire to elicit pity, to "draw from the compassion of others" what he ought to owe to his own exertions, and an attempt to obtain, by means of this fraudulent emotion, "the dues of labour without industry" (9: 344-5). The pension awarded to Burke was indeed an act of compassion, offered to help him in his financial

straits. This is what the *Letter to a Noble Lord* never openly confesses. For pity is the dangerous sentiment that Burke, by invoking the curse of labour as the immutable condition of existence, forbids his readers to indulge towards the manual labourers: it only "teach[es] them to seek resources where no resources are to be found, in something else than their own industry, and frugality, and sobriety" (9: 355). While Burke repeatedly conflates his own mental activity with manual labour--in what we might call, using Burke's own terms, a "coarse discrimination"--to make "nice distinctions" between himself and his political opponents, the use he makes of the analogy finally places him outside the pale of the labouring population altogether.²⁴

Burke's achievement was, nevertheless, a substantial one. He was remarkably successful in arrogating to himself the right to speak for ordinary labourers. "I have no man's proxy. I speak only from myself," insisted Burke on more than one occasion (8: 136;). Yet, in spite of this disclaimer, Burke repeatedly disavows any "singularity" of opinion, and writes as if his thought is sanctioned by the collected wisdom of ages and authorised by the "body" of the people of England (8: 66, 76, 137; *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* 3-4, 7). Burke's collective "we" is constructed, often quite specifically, on the model of a united, hierarchical, rural community, encompassing both the metaphorical head and figurative body of the country. "Shall I be pardoned," he inquires in the *Fourth Letter on a Regicide Peace*, "if I attempt a word on the part of us simple country folk?" (9: 48). Similarly, in the tract on *Scarcity*, as in the passage from the *Third Letter on a Regicide Peace* with which I began, Burke invokes the collective pronoun in order to unite the different classes of the community through

the assimilation of their labours: "We, the people, ought to be made sensible that it is not in breaking the laws of commerce, which are the laws of nature, and consequently the laws of God, that we are to place our hope of softening the divine displeasure to remove any calamity under which we suffer" (137).

As I shall argue in the next chapter, the ideological implications of Burke's easy assimilation of mental to manual work were not lost on the radical journalist William Cobbett. Cobbett recognised the force of Burke's appropriation of the analogy with manual labour both to support his own position and to undermine radical rhetoric, and did not allow Burke's appropriation of the analogy to go uncontested. The difficulty for Cobbett can be thought of as the problem bequeathed to radical rhetoric by Burke. On one hand, in his own practice as a political writer, Cobbett studiously avoids the glib identification of writing and ploughing by insisting on the specificity of physical labour. On the other hand, Cobbett stresses the similarity between his own labour as a writer and that of the physical labourers, both in order to align himself in a radical solidarity with the labouring classes, and in order to differentiate himself from pensioned intellectuals like Edmund Burke. This tension, I show, appears in various forms throughout Cobbett's political writings from 1816, producing enormous contradictions and, as Cobbett writes to resolve this tension, some of the most inventive figurative language of the Romantic period.

Notes

¹ Unless otherwise stated, all references are to *The Writings and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, cited by volume and page number.

² Burke frequently invokes the law of God and the law of nature to insist on the necessity of labour. In a letter to his Bristol constituents in May 1778, for example, he writes: "The Author of our Nature has written it strongly in that Nature, and promulgated the same Law in his written word, that man shall eat his Bread by his Labour" (*Correspondence* 3: 442).

³ As Ian Harris observes, the publication early in Burke's career of Rousseau's *Discourse on the Origin and Foundation of Inequality* (1755), in which Rousseau argued that social inequality was a perversion of man's natural state, gave Burke an opponent at which to tilt (xx). As Harris points out, Burke "came to argue that society depended for its prosperity on inequality" and that the poor as well as the rich would benefit from this state of affairs (xxii). The essence of property and the essence of aristocracy were to be unequal, so that both institutions were constituted on the pattern of nature, in which God had made men unequal (Harris xxiv).

⁴ Methodologically, therefore, I heed Furniss' advice: "The challenge for Burke's readers is not to find a key which will 'solve' those contradictions, but to trace as carefully as possible the way they are dramatised in the structure and figurative strategy of his texts" (*Aesthetic Ideology* 4).

⁵ In the first volume of *Capital*, for example, Marx writes: "The disappearance of the useful character of the products of labour [. . .] entails the disappearance of the different concrete forms of labour. They can no longer be distinguished, but are all reduced to the same kind of labour, human labour in the abstract" (128).

⁶ Burke keeps returning to this point (8: 181, 315). In *An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs*, he refers to those endeavours to "alter all the principles and opinions which have hitherto guided and contained the world" (17).

⁷ Pocock is right to insist on the central role played by intellectuals in Burke's view of the Revolution. In 1796, for instance, Burke wrote: "Never, before this time, was a set of literary men converted into a gang of robbers and assassins. Never before, did a den of bravoos and banditti, assume the garb and tone of an academy of philosophers" (9: 174). I think Pocock places too much stress on the Revolution as a conspiracy of intellectuals, however. Although Burke does use terms like "cabal" and "illuminati," Freeman points out that, in addition to a conspiracy theory, Burke formulates a sociological explanation of the Revolution based on changing social relations (198).

⁸ Burke's political career depended on the patronage of aristocratic political figures, first the patronage of William Gerard Hamilton (1759-65) and then from 1765 to 1782 of the enormously wealthy Whig landowner Charles Watson-Wentworth, the second Marquess of Rockingham. After Rockingham's death in 1782, Burke continued to rely on the patronage of the Rockingham family through Rockingham's nephew and

heir William Wentworth Fitzwilliam, fourth Earl Fitzwilliam. Burke not only relied on the aristocracy for support but came to adopt their values and imitate their behaviour. For example, Burke aped his noble Whig patrons by setting up a landed estate at Beaconsfield. His ambitions were to some extent to assimilate to the great (Harris 107; De Bruyn 47-9, 61-3).

⁹ On the essential contradiction between the reward for talent and labour, on one hand, and the hereditary principle on the other, see also Godwin (442, 472-5, 484) and Paine (*The Rights of Man* 140, 172-6). It is fair to say, I think, that most commentators on Burke accept the broad lineaments of MacPherson's argument while arguing that there is still an antagonism between the terms in which Burke eulogises the old order and the rational rhetoric of the political economist. For example, Furniss agrees, with some differences of emphasis, with MacPherson's explanation: that the ideology of the rights of man makes capitalism virtually "unworkable by striking at its very roots (the capital-labour relation)" (187). See also De Bruyn (108-10). Furniss, like Reid, is less convinced than MacPherson about the rhetorical consistency that Burke is able to achieve in his marrying of the principle of privilege and the principle of achievement (188).

¹⁰ There is an echo of Burke's critique of purely critical activity in Carlyle's memorable description of the philosophical work that had prepared the way for the French Revolution by clearing away the debris of the old order:

"Active hands drive in their wedges, set to their crow-bars; there is a comfortable appearance of work going on. Instead of here and there a stone falling out, here and there a handful of dust, whole masses tumble down, whole clouds and whirlwinds of dust, [. . .] of all labourers, no one can see such rapid extensive fruit of his labour as the Destroyer can and does" (*Works* 28: 179-80).

¹¹ Furniss analyses this exchange between Burke and Paine in the context of his fascinating discussion of the connection, in the *Reflections*, between speculation in politics and speculative finance ("Burke, Paine, and the Language of Assignats" 69-70).

¹² In 1781 Burke made a speech in the Commons in which he claimed that if it should ever come to a point where he would be forced to choose between the rich and powerful and the poor and weak, he would take his "fate with the poor, the low and the feeble" (cited in Freeman 113). Again, some of Burke's speeches on Ireland reinforce the view that he had sympathy with the "Jacobinism" that had its origin in hunger and oppression rather than in speculation (*Correspondence* 8: 378; 9: 162).

¹³ Interestingly, this is one of the places where Burke's psychologising puts him at odds with Adam Smith, who confronted the problem that it was exactly the "uniformity of stationery life" that was attractive and made the factory worker unwilling to take up arms in defence of his country. The slow, languid existence of steady labour, which Burke felt men would avoid, is precisely what Smith feared

would make men regard with "abhorrence the irregular, uncertain and adventurous life of the soldier" (*Wealth of Nations*, 2: 782, 787).

¹⁴ On this analogy, see De Bruyn (59-61). Furniss points out that for Burke, political institutions as well as property can be legitimated through longevity or prescription (*Aesthetic Ideology* 206-8).

¹⁵ Burke implies that the rage for novelty in the realm of discourse mirrors, or perhaps helps to drive, the penchant for innovation in politics. New models of written composition, he says in the fourth of the *Letters on a Regicide Peace*, recommend themselves to us simply by virtue of their novelty: "Everything is new, and according to the fashionable phrase, revolutionary. In former days authors valued themselves upon the maturity and fullness of their deliberations. Accordingly they predicted (perhaps with more arrogance than reason) an eternal duration to their works. The quite contrary is our present fashion. Writers value themselves now on the instability of their opinions and the transitory life of their productions" (9: 45-6). Again: "Everything we hear from them is new, and to use a phrase of their own, *revolutionary*; everything supposes a total revolution in the principles of reason, prudence, and moral feeling" (101).

¹⁶ The only critic to comment on the contradiction of terms in Burke's criticism of the mental labour of the revolutionaries is Furniss, who claims that Burke is accusing the French of an unbalanced understanding of the nature of political work": they are either too active, or they shun all exertion (*Aesthetic Ideology* 64-5).

¹⁷ Hence, Burke writes: "Our Constitution has more impediments than helps.

Its excellencies, when they come to be put to this sort of proof, may be found among its defects" (9: 111). As Kramnick points out, Burke's call to the British aristocracy to be more active in the defence of their own interests was strangely contradictory, since he believed that they were rendered inert by the very nature of their situation (118-19).

¹⁸ Burke is fond of such paradoxical formulations, in part at least, because they show that he has thought more deeply than his antagonists about the contradictory and complex character of the world; their simple and straightforward solutions evince a superficial analysis. See, for example, the passage in the *Reflections* on the wisdom needed to combine the principle of liberty and the principle of restraint in a "free government" (8: 290-1). Furniss also notes Burke's extensive use of oxymoronic terms (*Aesthetic Ideology* 175, 212-13, 227).

¹⁹ My summary of the circumstances of Burke's pension is indebted to the editors of Burke's *Writings* (9: 8-15); to Kramnick (171-3); to Reid (85-92); and to De Bruyn (19-58, 89-108).

²⁰ *A Letter to a Noble Lord* warns of the danger from intellectuals, philosophers and men of letters, whose careers, unlike Burke's, had not depended on the patronage of the politically dominant aristocracy. Advertently or not, Burke identifies himself quite closely with these intellectuals: "These philosophers are fanaticks; independent of any interest, which if it operated alone would make them much more tractable [. . .]. I am better able to enter into the character of this description of men than the noble

Duke can be. I have lived long and variously in the World. Without any considerable pretension to literature in myself, I have aspired to the love of letters. I have lived for a great many years in habitudes with those who professed them. I can form a tolerable estimate of what is likely to happen from a character, chiefly dependent for fame and fortune, on knowledge and talent, as well in its morbid and perverted state, as in that which is sound and natural" (9: 176). When literary men throw off religion and come "to act in corps, a more dreadful calamity cannot arise out of Hell to scourge mankind" (176).

²¹ The juxtaposition of "earn" and "generous" in this sentence illustrate clearly Reid's point that the vocabulary of political economy--"labour, earn, pay, merit"--comes into conflict with the language of patronage and deference--"obligation, bounty, gratitude, favour" (91).

²² There is no reason to doubt the sincerity of Burke's claims in his own defence. In response to an attack on his pension made in the Commons by a Whig member, John Christian Curwen, he wrote to William Windham in November 1795: "I have Labourd I have strong reason to be persuaded far more combining time and quantity together than any Member, that ever sat in that House" (*Correspondence* 8: 340). Burke's management of the impeachment of Warren Hastings, for example, was a long and thankless task, which required great resilience. His industry on the affairs of the India were those which Burke himself valued most: "most for the importance;

most for the labour; most for the judgment; most for constancy and perseverance in the pursuit" (9 : 159).

²³ Bruce James Smith comments on Burke's belief that the radicals' "historical prying was bound to turn up something for any faction to 'talk up'" (105, 122). In the *Rights of Man*, Paine remarked on Burke's aversion to history: "A Monarchical reasoner never traces government back to its source, or from its source [. . .]. A certain something forbids him to look back to a beginning, lest some robber or some Robin Hood should rise from the long obscurity of time, and say, *I am the origin*" (118).

²⁴ Wollstonecraft, Mackintosh and Paine reminded their readers of the theatrical, spectacular aspect of Burke's performance, and of Burke's uneven portioning of compassion. His tears, Wollstonecraft saw, were reserved for "the declamation of the theatre, or for the downfall of queens" (25-6); Mackintosh perceived that Burke's sensibility was only moved by "splendid sorrows of royalty" and not by the "homely miseries of the vulgar" (v-vi); and for Paine, it was not real distress but its "showy resemblance" that caught Burke's imagination: "He pities the plumage, but forgets the dying bird" (51). Burke's description of the suffering of Marie Antoinette, or of the French clergy, was a calculated appeal to the sensibilities of his audience which enabled him to deflect attention from the less palatable aspects of the system he was defending: the real suffering of the poor.

Chapter Three. Labour of Limbs and Labour of Mind: William Cobbett's

"United Body for Reform"

In the previous chapter I argued that Edmund Burke comprehended his own mental labour via two potentially contradictory models of intellectual work, one which elides the differences between mental and manual labour and another which emphasises the distinctions between them. Burke presents his own intellectual activity in terms of material labour in order to distinguish his endeavours from the airy, ungrounded theoretical work of the French philosophes and their British counterparts. I demonstrated, however, that there is a problem for Burke in his alignment of himself with other labourers, since he also wants to locate his thinking within an aristocratic lineage which sees political thought as the preserve of leisured gentlemen, of a natural aristocracy who, from their social location, possess the time and education to contemplate society as a whole. I will contend in this chapter that we can identify a similar tension--between wanting to stress the similarity of, and desiring to emphasise the difference between, writing and other kinds of work--operating in the writings of the radical journalist William Cobbett.

Born in 1763, the son of a small farmer and publican, Cobbett's career from "plough-boy" to famous political journalist and public figure was a remarkable one, as he himself often boasted. He made his name as a combative journalist and pamphleteer by attacking, while resident in the United States in the 1790s, the anti-British sentiments of the American democratic press. His writings of this period owe a great

deal to the conservative views and rhetoric of Burke. In his first American pamphlet, "Observation on Priestley's Emigration" (1794), for example, Cobbett attacked Joseph Priestley's "inflammatory discourses" and "Parisian *propagande*," and compared the new system of liberty in France unfavourably with the tried and trusted freedoms of the British constitution (17). The English Dissenters were, wrote Cobbett, "system-mongers" who aimed to "destroy a constitution which has borne the test and attracted the admiration of ages; and to establish in its place a new system, fabricated by themselves" (25, 17). Cobbett's pro-ministerial, anti-Gallic stance was appreciated by the Pitt Government, and, when he returned to Britain in 1800, he claimed to have been offered the running of two Government newspapers. After about 1804, however, Cobbett became progressively disillusioned with Pitt (and his prime ministerial successors) and with the system of war finance, which he believed had "woven venality into the fabric of the constitution" (*Collected Writings* 1: ix-xxiii). From this time, Cobbett would later claim, all his endeavours were aimed at bettering the condition of oppressed labourers, particularly of rural labourers.

Cobbett's radicalisation was reflected in his changed estimation of Burke. Cobbett had praised Burke in the preface to his American edition of Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord*, and when Burke died Cobbett lauded his "Herculean, invaluable and immortal labours" (Olivia Smith 202; *Collected Writings* 1: xii n13). Reverential mention of Burke's immortal labours was later replaced by slighting references to Burke's acceptance of a state pension and by depictions of him as a state hireling who became a tool of power: "this pensioned hack," "sycophant Burke" (*CPR* 31 [16. 11.

1816]: 503-4; *CPR* 32 [16. 08. 1817]: 630).¹ Cobbett's praise of Burke's great labours in the 1790s are paralleled, in the 1830s, by talk of his own writings as "Herculean labours" in behalf of the oppressed labouring classes (*CPR* 69 [10. 04. 1830]: 473). In January 1831, for example, he wrote of his "earnest endeavour to protect and cherish the labourers. This has, indeed, been upwardest in my mind all my life long, or," he adds, in a characteristic qualification, "at least ever since I was able duly to estimate their toils and their hardships" (*CPR* 71 [15. 01. 1831]: 160, 164). Again in 1831, Cobbett wrote that he had "constantly and most earnestly laboured, during thirty of the sixty years of my life" for the benefit "of the industrious, virtuous, and hardly-used labourers of England, amongst who I was born and bred" (*CPR* 73 [30. 07. 1831]: 258).

When Cobbett referred to his "Herculean labours," he was hardly exaggerating; it has been estimated that over his lifetime he published between 20 and 30 million words (Spater 2; Dyck 3). In his 1830 "Address to the Tax-Payers of England and Scotland on the Subject of the Seat in Parliament," for example, Cobbett simply enumerated his published works in order to show his credentials for a place in parliament:

A Register every week; nearly 500 Registers, more than enough to occupy the whole time of any other man; my French Grammar, Woodlands, Gardening Book, Cottage Economy, Sermons, Protestant Reformation, Corn Book, Advice to Young Men, and Guide to Emigrants, besides all my labours and cares about trees, seed, corn, straw-plait, and about everything I could possibly

think of, tending to the good of my country. (*CPR* 69 [10. 04. 1830]: 473, 477)

Several months later, he declared that, above all, he desired to be remembered as "the most laborious man that ever lived" (*CPR* 71 [8. 01. 1831]: 67). The question with which Cobbett is always confronted is how his mental work "tends to the good" of the nation, for it clearly does not do so in the demonstrable way that ploughing land, for example, does. Cobbett might wish to be remembered as the most laborious writer who ever lived, but how can we begin to compare his labour with the exhausting labour of the field hands? What is the relationship between Cobbett's labours and the physical labour of those on whose behalf he wrote? On one hand, I shall be arguing, Cobbett consistently stressed the resemblance between them. While Burke employs the analogy between mental and manual labour to universalise the physical labourer's bodily effort and pain and thereby reconcile the manual labourer to his condition ("our common doom"), Cobbett yokes intellectual to manual labourers in order to construct a rhetorical alliance of different categories of productive workers against an unproductive and idle ruling class. On the other hand, I will contend, Cobbett studiously avoids Burke's easy assimilation of bodily pains, by insisting on the merely metaphorical nature of his identification with other workers. Cobbett stresses the differences between his own labours and the physical labour of others in part to boast of his own exceptional talents, but also to give the real labourers their due and to acknowledge what he, as an intellectual, owes to those who do the work that supports the material life of the nation.

Cobbett's identification of himself as a productive worker, akin to the labourers and journeymen, is strengthened by his criticism of government pensioners like Burke. As he changed his political views, Cobbett also changed his ideas about the responsibility of intellectuals for the French Revolution. In 1794 he intimated that the "infidel philosophy of Voltaire, Rousseau, Gibbon, Priestley, and the rest of the enlightened tribe" played a part in bringing about the Revolution ("Observations on Priestley's Emigration" 31). In 1816 he argued that that the revolutionary excesses had been caused by the refusal of the old regime to allay the physical suffering of the people, and that this unresponsiveness was a result of conservative intellectuals: "it was surrounded by panders and parasites who told it nothing but flattering falsehoods." Radical intellectuals were the government's true friends, for bringing to their attention the discontent of the people (*CPR* 31 [2. 11. 1816]: 442-46). A great deal of Cobbett's criticism is directed against the literary parasites of the British government, writers like Burke, Robert Southey, and William Gifford--"insolent hirelings," "emissaries of corruption"--who, he claimed, had prostituted their principles for place and pay, and who misrepresented the causes of the labourer's oppression and misery (*CPR* 31: 446; *CPR* 32 [16. 08. 1817]: 617). The only moral use of the power of the press, given that all writers, even government writers, must finally depend for their physical existence on the taxes raised from the labour of the people, was to oppose tyranny by exposing and censuring the abuse of power. The political system could not survive if the press were to do its duty (*Rural Rides* 262-3, 266-7, 322, 508). When ordinary labourers commit acts of fraud or deception, argued Cobbett,

they are called criminals; but fraud was exactly what was being practiced by those who hired out their literary talents to the government, and who were paid out of taxes, taken from the people, in order to "cajole and deceive" the people (*CPR* 33 [13. 06. 1818]: 690-1). To distinguish himself from the writers and speakers who lived off the favours of the state, Cobbett refers over and over again to his own decision to turn down a government offer of money and maintain his independence and integrity by working for his living (*Manchester Lectures* 96).

In the first part of this chapter, I examine how, in his writings for the *Political Register* of 1816-17, Cobbett tries to fashion a rhetorical "we" to bring together mental and manual labourers into "one firm and united body in the cause of reform" (*CPR* 32 [16. 08. 1817]: 615). Cobbett is not clear, I shall argue, about the basis for such an alliance, and this uncertainty is manifested in an unresolved issue, at the heart of Cobbett's texts, of the relationship between the head and hands of the reform movement. Cobbett wavers, that is, over a question he would like to answer as straightforwardly as possible: who are the productive labourers of the nation? In the second part of the chapter, I argue that, in the writings after 1817, Cobbett continually returns to the question of the relationship between writing or thinking and physical labour and to the question of why writing is valuable or useful work. What kind of labour is representing, and how is that labour to be represented to those who do labour rather than think and write? While he always affirms the primacy of labour on the land, Cobbett also claims that his own work of political writing helps to lift the burden of oppression on the physical labourers who, materially, support him. Unlike

Burke, and the rest of the hireling crew who live off state pensions funded by the people's taxes, he returns to the labourers something of what he owes them, and through this reciprocal endeavour anchors his writing in the material work of others.

Cobbett achieved his greatest influence during 1816-17 when, as Leonora Natrass says, he was read by "everyone from government ministers to ploughboys," and when it is estimated that issues of his weekly *Political Register* sold between 40,000 and 70,000 copies (3-4). His "Address to the Journeymen and Labourers," published on the 2 November 1816, was perhaps the best-known and single most significant article that he wrote for the *Political Register*. The "Address" was the first article in which Cobbett spoke to the labouring classes directly, and, as Natrass points out, Cobbett addressed his intended audience practically as well as figuratively (109-10). In October 1816, Cobbett had started publishing a cheap two-penny edition of the *Political Register*. By off-printing the leading article onto both sides of a single open broadsheet, he evaded the stamp duty, which had added four and a half pence to the price of every newspaper, and thus expanded his potential readership. By announcing that the cheap edition could be reprinted by anyone, Cobbett ensured that the two-penny *Register* would achieve the widest possible audience (Dyck 78-9, 243n7). According to Cobbett's calculation, 6000 copies of the *Register* were sold on the first day, 20,000 in the first week, and 200,000 in the two months. He further estimated that, before the Government's legislative attack on the seditious press in 1817, a single *Register* would be read by 100 to 200 people in reading rooms around

the country. Cobbett continued to publish his "Two-penny Trash" until the end of March 1817, when he left England for the United States to escape the possibility of prosecution following the suspension of Habeas Corpus. By the time Cobbett returned to England in 1819, the government had closed the legal loophole by which the cheap *Register* had formerly escaped the stamp duty (*CPR* 32 [2. 08. 1817]: 545-63; Spater 347, 353; Olivia Smith 231).

As an instance of what he called the seditious tendency of the radical press, Southey, in two articles in the *Quarterly Review*, singled out Cobbett's "Address to the Journeymen and Labourers" (31: 273-5). In Southey's view: "Of all engines of mischief which were ever yet employed for the destruction of mankind, the press is the most formidable, when perverted in its uses" (273); "all the other causes of discontent are trifling in themselves and light in their consequence compared to the seditious press" (*Quarterly Review* 32: 551). What made the cheap *Register* so potentially explosive in the eyes of the Government and its supporters was the post-war economic slump, aggravated by massive demobilisation, which led to discontent among the labouring classes. A succession of good harvests to 1815 brought down the price of wheat, and this led to falling wages and unemployment in the rural areas. Then, to compound the distress of the agricultural workers, a freak poor harvest in 1816 caused a severe food shortage which led to high food prices. The manufacturing labourers, already suffering from unemployment as a result of the falling off of government wartime orders and of the saturation of export markets, were also affected by high food prices. In the months immediately following the peace, there were a number of

popular demonstrations against distress: in March 1815 there were anti-Corn Law riots in London, and, in the following year, food riots in East Anglia; while in the East Midlands there was a resurgence of machine-breaking in 1816.²

Although Southey charged Cobbett with incendiarism, critics now agree that there was nothing new or especially radical in the content of the early cheap *Registers*.³ Most commentators follow the analysis of Cobbett himself, who claimed that by raising their political awareness he had turned the discontented workers away from direct action (Nattrass 111). In the "Address to the Journeymen and Labourers" and in the texts that immediately followed, most notably his "Letter to the Luddites," Cobbett directed the workers towards what he termed the "real" cause of their distress: the enormous taxes levied disproportionately by the Government on the labouring poor. For Cobbett, taxes were the primary means by which the nation's resources were taken out of the hands of those who actually worked and given to those who, without doing any real work, got wealthier: landowners, who leased land at exorbitant rents, government creditors, and the growing number of government placemen and pensioners. The national debt after the war was 900 million pounds, the annual interest on which was a third of all government expenditure. The burden of repayment was borne disproportionately by the poor, since, with the abolition of wartime income tax, the Government levied high rates of tax on everyday commodities such as salt, tea, and candles. In addition to the taxes required to service the debt, another five million a year was needed to pay the retirement costs of military officers. The beneficiaries of this system were the holders of the government debt

("fundholders" and "money-jobbers") who lived, according to Cobbett, in idleness on the revenue raised out of taxes. Taxes, he summarised, are "the sum taken from those who labour to be given to those who do not labour" (*CPR* 31 [30. 11. 1816]: 577).⁴ In recommending a campaign of petitioning as a political strategy towards the reform of parliament, Cobbett was endorsing Francis Burdett's earlier address to the Hampden Club, in which he had advocated mass petitioning. Like Burdett, Cobbett was worried that the food riots and machine-breakings would alienate the middle classes and set back the cause of reform. A primary goal of the cheap *Registers* was to counter the nefarious influence of the corrupt government press, which had attempted, Cobbett believed, to redirect the anger of the labourers away from the government and towards farmers, employers, various traders, and towards machinery (*CPR* 31 [30. 11. 1816]: 561-92). "The writers and speakers, who labour in the cause of corruption, have taken great pains to make the labouring classes believe, that they [the farmers and employers] are not taxed," and "set one part of the people against the other part" (564-5). By explaining to the labouring classes the "real cause" of their misery (high taxes) and by proposing a course of action (petitioning) which would lead to a desired end (parliamentary reform), Cobbett's writings during 1816-17 tried to prevent bickering between the social classes: his writings, he declared in 1817, "tended to withdraw the attention of the people from these petty disputes; they tended to make them one firm and united body in the cause of Reform" (*CPR* 32 [16. 08. 1817]: 615).

Social and economic reconstruction, Cobbett informed his readers, would follow political reform. The strategy of the "Address to the Journeymen and

Labourers" and of the *Registers* that followed was to create a coalition for reform, by constructing union among different kinds of productive workers, a unity which included that between the writer and his audience. What complicates the attempt to create an alliance is Cobbett's vacillation over the basis of the relationship between those who work with their hands and those who work with their minds. As a result of this indecision, Cobbett's definition of the oppressed and exploited classes and his articulation of the connection between the constituencies of the reform movement are unclear. To look closely at the language of the "Address," which is exemplary of the early cheap *Registers* in its rhetoric, I quote at length from the opening paragraphs:

Friends and Fellow Countrymen,

Whatever the pride of rank, of riches, or of scholarship, may have induced some men to believe, or to affect to believe, the real strength and all the resources of a country, ever have sprung and ever must spring, from the *labour* of its people; and hence it is, that this nation, which is so small in numbers and so poor in climate and soil compared with many others, has, for many ages, been the most powerful nation in the world: it is the most industrious, the most laborious, and, therefore, the most powerful. Elegant dresses, superb furniture, stately buildings, fine roads and canals, fleet horses and carriages, numerous and stout ships, warehouses teeming with goods; all these, and many other objects that fall under our view, are so many marks of national wealth and resources. But all these spring from *labour*. Without the journeyman and the labourer none of them could exist; without the assistance

of their hands, the country would be a wilderness, hardly worth the notice of an invader.

As it is the labour of those who toil which makes a country abound in resources, so it is the same class of men, who must, by their arms, secure its safety and uphold its fame. Titles and immense sums of money have been bestowed upon numerous Naval and Military Commanders. Without calling the justice of these in question, we may assert, that the victories were obtained by *you* and your fathers and brothers and sons, in co-operation with those Commanders, who, with *your* aid, have done great and wonderful things; but, who, without that aid, would have been as impotent as children at the breast.

With this correct idea of your own worth in your minds, with what indignation must you hear yourselves called the Populace, the Rabble, the Mob, the Swinish Multitude [. . .]. But suppress your indignation, until we return to this topic, after we have considered the *cause* of your present misery and the measures which have produced that cause.

In the fifth paragraph, Cobbett states the cause of the people's distress: "it is the *enormous amount of the taxes*, which the Government compels us to pay for the support of its army, its placemen, its pensioners, &c., and for the payment of the interest of its debt." But Cobbett interposes an important paragraph, in which he states that the object of the "Address" is to produce an alliance among different productive orders of society to campaign for parliamentary reform:

The times in which we live are full of peril. The nation as described by the very creatures of the Government, is fast advancing to that period when an important change must take place. It is the lot of mankind, that some shall labour with their limbs and others with their minds; and on all occasions, more especially on an occasion like the present one, it is the duty of the latter to come to the assistance of the former. We are all equally interested in the peace and happiness of our common country. It is of the utmost importance, that in the seeking to obtain those objects, our endeavours should be uniform, and tend all to the same point. Such an uniformity cannot exist with an uniformity of sentiment as to public matters, and to produce this latter uniformity amongst you is the object of this address. (*CPR* 31: 433-5)

Throughout the article Cobbett encourages the labourers to cooperate with other classes. When Cobbett asserts in the first paragraph that the labour of its people is the source of a nation's wealth and strength, the reader assumes that he is talking of the manual labour of the journeymen and labourers, since the objects which stand for national wealth are all material objects: clothing, furniture, buildings, roads, ships, and warehouses full of goods. In the final sentence of the paragraph, Cobbett reinforces the point: it is the *assistance* of the labourers' hands that make the wildernesses fertile. Later in the article, Cobbett uses the same word, assist, in a slightly different sense: "There can exist no riches and no resources which [the unfortunate journeymen and labourers] by their labour have not *assisted* to create" (emphasis added) (*CPR* 31: 448). Now, it is the labour of the manual workers in co-operation with other kinds of

labour that is responsible for the strength and wealth of the country. The same ambiguity is evident in the second paragraph. In the first sentence Cobbett simply reasserts that the resources and the security of the nation depend on "the labour of those who toil." It is manual labourers--whom Cobbett identifies by the telling metonyms "hands" and "arms"--who produce wealth and fight the battles. The same qualification appears again, however; it is the "co-operation" of arms and head, of foot soldiers and commanders, which is said to do great and wonderful things. If the particular division that Cobbett is trying to reconcile in the first paragraph is that between employer and his labourers; in the second paragraph it is that between the foot soldier and his officers. The point Cobbett wants to make is that without the hands and arms of the journeymen and labourers, the commanding officers could not have achieved anything, indeed they "would have been impotent as children at the breast." The weight of the rhetoric of the first two paragraphs, while urging co-operation between head and hands, is to assert that it is the manual workers, not their social superiors, who do the real labour and who provide the real strength. At the same time, Cobbett carefully plays down the full, potentially revolutionary, implications of the doctrine that labour is the sole creator of all wealth.

The word "co-operate" prepares the reader for Cobbett's key assertion in the third sentence of the fourth paragraph: "It is the lot of mankind, that some shall labour with their limbs and others with their minds." In the fourth paragraph it is the separation between the intellectual and the manual worker, between the writer and his audience, which is the pertinent division. Cobbett tries to bring together manual and

mental labourers in the cause of reform. It is the duty of the intellectual workers, Cobbett contends, to assist the manual workers. Now the "assistance" comes from the other direction: if the head is weak without the body when it comes to making products or fighting battles, then it is the body which is weak when it is a question of political action. If manual labour supported the physical life of the country and defended its security, then the duty of mental workers who had benefited from this exertion was to work for reform, and to labour to better the life conditions of the poor. The relationship between the toils of the mind and the labours of the body were, for Cobbett, not only reciprocal but, ideally, analogous. In 1832, for example, Cobbett described the mental attitude needed to embark on the "great task" of reform by evoking the frame of mind required to undertake more palpable kind of labour: "The thing, to be done well, and to make this reform really satisfactory to the nation, must be set about in right earnest; must be begun, as men begin to plough a field, or to weave a piece of cloth" (*Manchester Lectures* 12-13).

In what is still the most incisive criticism of the "Address to the Journeymen and Labourers," Raymond Williams comments on these opening paragraphs: "With this candid assertion of the permanence of this fundamental division of labour within class society, Cobbett establishes a specific relation to his new popular audience. The remedies of the ruling class are cruel and deceptive, but the people's own uninstructed responses can be dangerous" (*Cobbett* 17). For Williams, Cobbett's article is a model for the way in which an "intense phase of self-organisation and protest by a still-forming working and labouring class was intervened in and in part appropriated by a

primarily middle-class reforming movement, in the interest of small employers" (17).

While Williams is correct to say that Cobbett establishes a hierarchical relationship between himself and his audience, I would emphasise that Cobbett endeavours also to dispel the perception of hierarchy, presenting himself according to what E. P.

Thompson calls his myth of himself as a "plain Englishman unusually belligerent and persevering, but not especially talented, [. . .] more normal than he was" (*The Making of the English Working Class* 753-4). Cobbett reminded his reader that he, too, had been a ploughboy, and a common soldier. In his "Letter to the Luddites" of November 1816, in a passage that Thompson might have cited in support of his claim, Cobbett denies that he was talking down to his audience:

I am not one of those, who have the insolence to presume, that men are *ignorant* because they are poor. If I myself have more knowledge and talent than appears to have fallen to the lot of those who have brought us into our present miserable state, it ought to convince me, that there are thousands and thousands, now unknown to the public, possessed of greater talent, my education having been that of a common soldier grafted upon the ploughboy. Therefore, I beg you not to suppose, that I address myself to you as one who pretends to any superiority in point of rank, or of natural endowment. (*CPR* 31 [30. 11. 1816]: 563-4)

The two perspectives represented by Williams and Thompson are both correct, since Cobbett, paradoxically, both established a social distance and attempted to abolish that gap. Cobbett's ambiguous presentation of the relationship between those who toil with

their minds and those who toil with their bodies is not a problem that is confined to the period 1816-17; the same problem surfaces elsewhere in Cobbett's writings. The labour of the mind is the paradoxical figure for Cobbett's ambivalence, for his desire for a relationship of solidarity and familiarity with the labourers, and his simultaneous assertion of a distinction based on the separation of mental and manual labours.

The uncertain cohesion among the various productive classes--specifically, the difficulty of creating solidarity between the writer and his audience--is encapsulated by Cobbett's deployment of pronouns. In the final two sentences of the fourth paragraph, Cobbett says that "our endeavours" should be uniform in pursuing the good of "our common country," but then adds that the object of the "Address" is to produce uniformity "amongst you." Is Cobbett producing unity by instructing the factious manual labourers (you, the mob), or is he trying to produce unity between two different factions--mental and manual--of the labouring classes, each presently pursuing its partial interest (we, the mob)? Most commentators on the "Address" and on the early cheap *Registers* notice Cobbett's use of pronouns; Dyck, for example, remarks upon Cobbett's "rapid and confident deployment of first and second person pronouns" (79). Cobbett's shift from collective first-person to second-person form of address, however, is more a sign of his uncertainty than his confidence.⁵ In the "Address," Cobbett referred to the insults heaped on the labourers by the corrupt government press: "With what indignation must you hear yourselves called the Populace, the Rabble, the Mob, the Swinish Multitude" (2). The pronoun here is clearly "you," as Cobbett says that it is the manual labourers who are thus treated.

Three months later the "you" becomes "we": "There may be, as there have been, men to call us the 'Swinish Multitude'" (*CPR* 32 [1. 02. 1817]: 151). The "us" includes the writer among the rabble multitude and tries to bridge the gap between the head and hands.

In his slightly later article "On the Corruption of the English Press"(*CPR* 33 [13. 06. 1818]: 679-98), written while he was in his second period of exile in the United States, Cobbett criticises the use of the pronoun "we" by the writers of the *Quarterly Review*. The collective pronoun, Cobbett points out, is used to lend authority to their works by indicating that the persons writing are of a high place in society with a right to censor the productions of other writers. "We" is a cover which keeps the actual identity of the writers from public view. In reality these writers are "mean-spirited, dependent creatures, eating their bread daily out of the hands of the Treasury clerk," who are employed solely to oppose the extension of political and civil liberties. The public would read them with less respect if they saw them as "needy men, writing for so much a page" (682-3, 685). Cobbett's is a lucid account of the way the pompous form of address conveys cultural authority. His own difficulties with pronouns, in the "Address to the Journeymen and Labourers," arise, in part, from Cobbett's determination to avoid this easy assimilation of writer and labourer.

The fluid use of pronouns in the "Address" is, in part, a consequence of Cobbett's uncertain use of the distinction between productive and unproductive labour, which the pronouns are meant to express. The real cause of the misery of the country, Cobbett repeated, was that the "fruit of productive labour is now taken and given to

unproductive labour in such a large proportion that production and reproduction, with all their wonderful effects, are daily and hourly diminishing" (*CPR* 32 [1. 02. 1817]: 140). But does Cobbett's writing count as productive labour, or is he an idler living off the labour of others? In Adam Smith's founding definition, Cobbett, as a man of letters, would be classed as an unproductive worker as he is not contributing to the wealth of the country by adding economic value to raw material. In Cobbett's hands the distinction is a form of polemic against those who lived off the taxes paid by workers. Following Paine, Cobbett thinks of the productive/ unproductive distinction as being aligned with the distinction between tax-payers and tax-receivers. Hence, he wrote that by 1829 the nation had been divided into two classes, tax payers and tax receivers, and that the burden of taxes had become so great that no one who belonged to the former category could survive (*Emigrant's Guide* 6-8). According to this definition, of course, Cobbett, as a tax-payer, would count as a productive worker. On the other hand, Cobbett's own rhetoric sometimes indicates that he, like Smith in *The Wealth of Nations*, tends to view manual labour alone as really "productive" or useful.

For example, Cobbett sometimes sees himself as a dependent, one of those living off the real material labour of others: "I have always, so far as I have had any little power," he said in 1830, "been the advocate for doing justice to those who work-to those who give us all that we eat, and drink, and wear [. . .] called the *lower orders*" (*Eleven Lectures on the French Revolution*, Lecture 1: 1). In this passage the distinction between those who toil and "we" who live off that toil is frankly made, and

Cobbett resists the easy identification of writing and thinking with the real, material work done in the fields. It is the admission of the intellectual's dependence on the labourer which fuels his political feelings: "It was owing to accident that I was not a labourer all my life. I feel this at any rate; and unnatural should I be, if I had not great consideration for all that class of men, who, performing as they do, the toils of the community, are entitled, when they experience distress, to our most solicitous regard and kindest compassion" (*CPR* 41 [1.06. 1822]: 533-4). At the same time, Cobbett identifies his own labour with material labour, since he, too, pays taxes to support government idlers. In his *Plan of Parliamentary Reform* (1830) he speaks of Lord Grenville as "this devourer of the fruit of our skill and our labour" (1). Cobbett claims that his work is as productive as that of the manual worker because he, too, earns his living and pays taxes which support an unproductive and idle ruling class. It might be objected that Cobbett's definitions change according to his audience. Cobbett often makes these different claims in the same text, however; in the second of his *Lectures on the French and Belgian Revolutions*, for instance, he makes reference both to the work of writing as idleness ["we, who live in idleness; we, who are worked for and clothed and fed by you, are bound in duty to make you see and understand"] and to the writer as co-labourer with his audience ["We are in the habit of pulling off our hats, and bowing and curtsying to these very people who are living on our toil"] (2: 3, 13). In the space of a few pages, Cobbett says "your" toil (which supports us) and "our" toil (which supports them). The category of productive labourers is fluid, and

either expands to include the tax-paying writer, or contracts to exclude all those who do not work with their hands to support the physical existence of society.

Cobbett once explained his use of the collective pronoun: "I say WE, because I never can separate myself from the Labouring Classes" (cited in Dyck 3). But the pronoun does not explain the basis of Cobbett's attachment to the labourers. Cobbett, we might say, has two strategies for allying himself with the labouring poor. The first is to acknowledge his dependence on them for his physical survival; the problem with this admission is that it seems to put him in the same category as the writers who depended on state pensions, who effectively consume the fruits of productive labour while giving nothing of value in return. The second strategy is to insist that writers, such as Cobbett himself, who earn their living by selling their productions to the public, rather than by living on taxes, are a part of the productive classes. In this case, Cobbett leans towards the identification of mental and physical labour in order to distinguish his own intellectual endeavours from those who had, like Burke, prostituted their talents: tract writers like Hannah More, the hack writers on the *Quarterly Review*, and the rest of the kept press.

As I have observed, in his criticism of the "Address to the Journeymen and Labourers," Williams draws attention to the way Cobbett's careful differentiation between those who toil with their limbs and those who labour with their minds establishes a social relation between the instructing writer and uninstructed labourers. However, Cobbett adopts the role of political instructor to those at the top as well as those at the bottom of the social pyramid. While in his "Address to the Journeymen

and Labourers" Cobbett tries to convince manual labourers that they must co-operate with their employers, in his "Address to the Country-Gentlemen showing that their only remaining choice is between Reform and total ruin," he tries to persuade the landlords to side with the labourers in the work of reform; at this moment, Cobbett still believed that the landlords could be convinced that they needed to take a leading role in the country reform movement. The landlords opposed parliamentary reform, Cobbett averred, only because they had been led by the corrupt press into believing that a change in the system of political representation would lead to the confiscation of their property (*CPR* 31 [21. 12. 1816]: 777). When the landowners had realised the truth of the matter, they would become "friends and fellow-labourers" in the cause of reform ("Mr. Cobbett's Taking leave of his Countrymen" *CPR* 32: 6). It was the high taxes for debt repayment, Cobbett informs them, which were degrading property and leading to the break up of landed estates. He tells the landlords that their own fate is bound up with the well-being of the labourers, since without their labour "the country would become a wilderness again" (*CPR* 31 [21. 12. 1816]: 777). There is a danger, he warned the landlords, in keeping aloof from the people since they could never hold their property in contempt of the people, and, even if they could, that property would be worth nothing without the people's labour. In order to reconcile themselves with the labouring poor, then, Cobbett urges the landlords to take the lead in the cause of reform.

In this article, as in the "Address to the Journeymen and Labourers," while Cobbett insists that the mind of the community was ineffectual without the labouring

body, he also suggests that the country reform movement needed the guidance of a head. "You have only to place yourselves at their head," Cobbett tells the landlords, "to obtain for them the full accomplishment of their wishes" (*CPR* 31: 800). If the landlords do not volunteer themselves as leaders of the reform movement the people will produce their own leaders, Cobbett warns. The people have acquired political knowledge; they are no longer a "shouting, huzzaing rabble" but a "well-informed body" who understand the causes of their own misery, and "unless they [the Country Gentlemen] place themselves at the head of the people, in the work of Reform, the people will find leaders amongst their own body" (780-1). Cobbett's warning to the landlords is also a caution to reform leaders, like Cobbett himself perhaps, not to keep aloof from the body of the reform movement. His reader might legitimately enquire what reason the people have for applying to their social superiors for leadership at all; if the body can form its own mind, then the mind clearly needs a labouring body more than body needs a thinking head. I want, therefore, to look more closely at Cobbett's metonymies of body parts (head and hands) which stand for the labours of the mind and the toils of the body. Cobbett wants to create "one firm and united body" for reform, but his figures of speech (like his pronouns) express his uncertainty about the basis for a relationship between mental and manual workers.

In his 1817 *Quarterly Review* articles on the radical press, Southey argued for using the law to silence the seditious radical press. For Cobbett the resort to the law was the height of cowardly behaviour, and was proof that the government press could not match him by their arguments. In a passage which Cobbett indignantly quoted in

the *Political Register*, Southey contended that the organic body of British society was being lacerated by the activities of the seditious press:

The press may combat the press in ordinary times and upon ordinary topics [. . .]. But in seasons of great agitation, or on those momentous subjects in which the peace and security of society, nay the very existence of the social order itself is involved, it is absurd to suppose that the healing will come from the same weapon as the wound. (Southey, *Quarterly Review* 31: 275; *CPR* 32 [2. 02. 1817]: 253)

Drawing on similarly visceral images, Cobbett imagined the united body of reform would be mutilated as a result of the counter-attacks on him by the pro-ministerial press. In this article of February 1817, for example, he accused the government press of attacking him in order to divide the reform movement. Southey had proposed that the government should enact legislation to meet the threat of the seditious press.

Cobbett responded that the connection between him and his working-class readers was so intimate that writers like Southey would have to resort to physical means to prevent him from communicating with them:

They [the writers of the *Quarterly Review*] would tear me to pieces for writing; they would tear the people to pieces for reading; they would chop off my hand, and pluck out the people's eyes; and this, or something very near to this, they, or somebody else, must do, before I shall cease to write, or the people cease to read. (*CPR* 32: 255)

It is worth noting that, here, it is the hand rather than the head which stands in for the writer's activity. This is an attempt, perhaps, to render the writer's work less rarefied; for the use of the metonymy of hands and head to talk about manual and mental toil and about the body and leadership of the reform movement already admits to a fundamental separation of mental workers from manual workers, a separation that Cobbett accuses the government writers of trying to induce. Despite the confusing use of figures, Cobbett's meaning is clear enough: he argues that the effect of his writings has been to produce enlightenment in the labourers, to "produce thinking and call forth the reasoning faculties of the mind," and this had led to a decrease in violence (*CPR* 32: 253-4). Because the labouring classes can now think for themselves, the efforts of the *Quarterly* writers to sunder him from his readers are in vain. The result of his endeavours have been, he says, "to take one head, full of useful knowledge, and to clap it safe and sound upon every pair of shoulders in the kingdom" (255). This preposterous, but somehow memorable, image of decapitation as a metaphor for political enlightenment counters the attempt of government writers to dismember the reform movement.

There is no question that Cobbett was proud of having brought about the political education of the labourers. In his ironically titled, "Letter to the 'Deluded People'" of March 1817, Cobbett again makes the point that the law was being used to separate the head of reform movement from the body. In this article, Cobbett addresses the Government's decision, through the suspension of Habeas Corpus in February and the Seditious Meetings Act in March, to legislate against the influence of

the radical press. The harsh laws had been introduced solely to counter the influence of the cheap *Register* on the minds of the people, Cobbett claimed. But the Government's effort to sever the body of reform aimed at dividing the head from the body would not succeed, he alleged, because the people had already been enlightened and could think for themselves. His words have already inculcated the important ideas and principles on people's minds and "those principles will never be eradicated, and never cease to actuate the minds of Englishmen" (*CPR* 32 [22. 03. 1817]: 364). Cobbett makes this same point in "Mr. Cobbett's Taking leave of his Countrymen," the last *Register* he produced before embarking for the United States in March 1817 following the suspension of Habeas Corpus. He defended his decision to leave the country by claiming that he would be of more service to his country and the cause of reform by continuing to write and publish his *Register* from across the Atlantic (*CPR* 32: 3-6).⁶ He reassured his readers that the Government's legislative assault was futile, because the people's political enlightenment was permanent; they have read Cobbett's writings and have been taught to think for themselves.

While Cobbett holds, in these articles, that his writings had already produced the political education that the government was acting to prevent, his rhetoric works against his argument, because the reductive substitution of "hands" for manual workers does not suggest that the labourers were able to think for themselves. Thus, in his leave-taking article, for instance, Cobbett expresses concern about the impact on the body of its separation from the mind: "every blow which is aimed against the men who have taken the most prominent part in the cause of Reform, is aimed against the

cause itself and at every person who is attached to the cause, just as much, just as effectually, as a blow aimed at the head of a man is aimed at his fingers and his toes" (13). While Cobbett asserts, on one hand, that the government legislates too late because the people have already been enlightened--have had Cobbett's head placed on their shoulders--now he appears to doubt that the acephalous reform movement could survive the government's attack on the *Political Register*. In the same article, Cobbett warns the labouring people that the government press may attempt to calumniate him in his absence; he worries, in particular, that some unscrupulous authors will try to publish falsehoods under his name. He consoles himself and his readers, however, with the following analogy: "I am not much afraid of your being imposed upon in this way, for, amidst the crowd of writers, I hope you will now as easily distinguish my voice as a lamb does that of its mother, though there be hundreds of others bleating at the same moment" (29-30). This is a touching image but not one that makes the labourers appear either physically or intellectually autonomous. Generally, in Cobbett's view, the head is impotent without the productive hands, but in the work of reform it is the body that needs the guiding head. At the same time that he wants to claim that the body of the people has been sufficiently enlightened to make up its own mind, Cobbett wants to make the "labours of the mind" necessary to the work of reform.

The hesitation between stressing his own power and attributing agency to the workers is evident, too, in a tension between Cobbett's egotism--his tendency to claim exclusive credit for political events--and his generosity, his willingness to assign credit to others for his achievements. Cobbett sometimes claimed that his writing alone--"the

wonderful effects produced by his talents"--had been responsible for the political opposition to the government. After he started publishing his *Register* from the United States, Cobbett published a series of six letters, "A History of the Last Hundred Days of English Freedom," in which he affirmed that the government's repressive measures were aimed at silencing the cheap *Register*: the government's "mean and outrageous acts" have been "in opposition to the talents of one single man, unassisted and unsupported by any thing on earth but the resources of his own mind" (*CPR* 32 [26. 07. 1817]: 528). At other moments, he declared not only that the demand for suffrage originated in the people's experience, but that that he had learnt more from the people than they had learnt from him: "All the celebrity which my writings have obtained [. . .] I owe less to my own talents than to that discernment and that noble spirit in you, which have at once instructed my mind and warmed my heart" ("Mr. Cobbett's Taking leave of his Countrymen" *CPR* 32: 31). If the first passage is an instance of Cobbett's outrageous self esteem, the second is an instance of his generosity, of what E. P. Thompson calls, citing a similar passage, an acknowledgment of "the dialectical nature of the very process by which his own ideas were formed" (*The Making of the English Working Class* 758). Hence, while Cobbett often boasted that he had been the guiding light of the reform movement, on other occasions, he could simply state: "I always say that I have derived from the people [. . .] ten times the light that I have communicated to them" (cited in Thompson 758). Kevin Gilmartin argues that Cobbett's gesture of "self-effacement" is a tactical and politically circumspect one, given that the government was intent on persecuting the radical press (188-9). But there is, I have

been arguing, a genuine and persistent difficulty about how to describe the relationship between writing and other kinds of labour and about where to locate political agency. The toil of the mind is both a way of distinguishing the writer and a way of embedding him in the labouring population. I will return to the tension between Cobbett's egotism and his self-effacement and to the question of agency at the end of this chapter.⁷

The difficulty Cobbett experienced in articulating the connection between the mind and body of the reform movement, and in expressing the relationship between the writer and the rest of the working community, shows up again, in an amusing coda, in Cobbett's retrospective commentary on the problem of petitioning, the tactic which he had recommended to the working classes in his "Address to the Journeymen and Labourers." In January 1817, a meeting of radical leaders at the Crown and Anchor tavern in London agreed upon a campaign of mass petitioning, and a large number of petitions were addressed to Parliament from across the nation in 1817 and 1818. One reason for Parliament's refusal to admit the petitions, according to Olivia Smith, was the "language in which they were written" (30). In the parliamentary debates on popular petitions, however, the main objections expressed by MPs were that they were not the true sentiments or the authentic language of the people at all, but the compositions of a small number of dissatisfied intellectuals who had mass-produced petitions to parliament to give the impression of popular support for reform. Similarity of form and expression was taken to be evidence "that they had all proceeded from the same hand and mind" (*Hansard's Parliamentary Debates* 35 (1817): 861, 1003). A common complaint about the petitions was that they were printed instead of hand-

written, especially if they happened to be printed by the same (London) printer (859-60, 917, 1003); other reasons given for refusing petitions was that the signatures were written in the same hand, that the signatures were appended on a separate sheet from the petition, or that the wording on separate petitions was identical (861, 913-15). These were taken to be evidence of a "manufactured petition," one which had been pre-prepared for the people by a few "designing men" (237, 1002). One member wondered "how far those petitions were to be considered as the genuine and authentic language of the petitioners, or how far they were the dictation of certain factious demagogues who were now agitating the question of reform throughout the country" (91). Another wondered whether there was a "bureau in town for the manufacture of petitions, and another in the country for procuring signatures? And might not some demagogues join the operation of the two without any authority from the persons whose names were employed?" (95-6). This tactic of assigning the labourers' discontent to the intervention of "designing" intellectuals who claimed to speak for the people is exactly the kind of separation between the head and hands of the reform movement that Cobbett wrote to overcome.

In 1830, when he was again advising the labouring classes to petition for reform, Cobbett answered the objection that the petitions were the work of one man:

As to the petitions being the work of the same man. How preposterous!

Whence is to come the complaint, or the petition? It must be some one man to propose it. It must emanate from somebody. All minds may be occupied about the same thing, but it must come from one hand only. All cannot take up the

pen and write a petition; and what objection, therefore, can there be, that the same petition come from Manchester and Southwark? None. (*Lectures on the French Revolution* 2: 9)

The writer here is no longer the leader and guiding head of the reform movement--an intellectual disconnected from the physical body--but its faithful amanuensis, merely reporting the collective will. Cobbett solves the problem of the collective nature of the movement by reversing the roles of leader and led, and by making the mental worker the manual servant of the people's mind. Countering his own previous rhetoric about the separation of head and body, he both gives the writer a material role in the reform movement and pays respect to the political intelligence of the people. The "you" and "I" becomes a "we" when the head and hands change places, when the writer lends his own hand to the cause of reform.

I have shown how, in the *Political Registers* of 1816-17, Cobbett's attempt to suture together the labours of mind and body into a united body for reform show up as inconsistencies in his texts. In the second half of this chapter, I look at Cobbett's writings following his emigration to the United States in March 1817, to consider his vacillation over the relative importance of mental and manual labour. When he talks of bodily labour, Cobbett refers to those who, by producing food and drink, buildings and clothing, support the physical existence of the nation, and he is always acutely aware that writing and thinking are only equivocally and indirectly connected to this primary sector of production. In Cobbett's scheme of things, labour on the land is of fundamental importance, and it has something like the significance for him that the

"base" had for Marx. Writing and thinking depend on that prior material labour.

Nevertheless, Cobbett also wants to claim that his writings are as valuable to his country as the more obviously essential work of those who had laboured their whole lives in the fields. To demonstrate the importance of intellectual labour, he suggests that his writings return, as in the writing of petitions, to lend a hand to those who laboured primarily with their limbs.

Cobbett left England at the suspension of Habeas Corpus and arrived in New York in May 1817; he lived there, in this second period of exile, for over two years, eventually arriving back in England in November 1819. In the United States Cobbett wrote two books which he hoped would provide the income to relieve his financial situation: *A Year's Residence in the United States* and *Grammar of the English Language*. In each book, Cobbett both suggests the primacy of bodily labour and makes the case for the still greater importance of the mental work of political writing.

In one of the first *Registers* addressed to his compatriots from across the Atlantic, Cobbett announced his intention to move closer to the land in order to make his living:

I must eat and drink [. . .]. I have not the least doubt that we shall be able to get plenty of both from the earth, which is never niggardly towards those, who will apply to her with earnestness and with care. To the earth, therefore, the *untaxed* earth, I will apply. It would be affectation to pretend, that I have not the means of *living* here by my *pen*; but it is my intention to be a downright farmer, and to *depend* solely upon what I can get in that way. I begin by

counting upon nothing but what I can raise from the ground. (*CPR* 32 [26. 07. 1817]: 522)

Cut off from the labouring poor of England whose toil had supported his own industry, he will have to move closer to the earth himself. Cobbett's emphatic vocabulary--"downright . . . depend solely . . . count upon nothing"--conveys the significance of the land in his thinking. In times of crisis, Cobbett advocates moving closer to the land. Hence in one of his best-known works, *The Poor Man's Friend*, Cobbett recommends, as one way of escaping the high taxes on everyday necessities, buying goods in as-near-to-raw state as possible. Illustrating this precept, characteristically, by citing his own behavior, Cobbett sums up his philosophy with a typically home-spun image: "I jostle myself in as nearly as I possibly can to the land" (para. 124). However, although it is to the land, not to the pen, that he will resort to make his living, the land only serves to support his writing:

[Although] I mean to place my sole *dependence* for a living, upon the fidelity of the *earth*, I beg you not to suppose, that I mean to cease, for one moment, in my efforts to aid in the restoration of the freedom of my country. *That* shall be the constant object of my life. *That* nothing shall prevent me from pursuing, and by all the means, of all sorts, that my mind can invent, or that it can avail itself of. (*CPR* 32: 527)

Cobbett moves closer to the occupation of those for whom he writes in order to authorise his political writings, for dependence on the land signifies independence from the Government.

The same motion is evident in *A Year's Residence*, a book which purports to offer advice to would-be emigrants on various aspects of farming and gardening in the United States. A great part of the book consists of a journal of his first year in America in which he recorded useful details about climate, soil, and so on. He heartily recommends emigration, for "a farmer here depends on nobody but himself" (*A Year's Residence* 6). Cobbett's persona is that of a "downright" farmer, and he is a writer, he implies, only in the intervals between sowing and harvesting his crops. He concedes that he is known primarily as a writer and, as such, his readers might think of him as a city-dweller. To establish his qualification to speak on country matters, therefore, Cobbett refers to his upbringing; he was born and bred into a farming family and had been a gardener all his life (7-9). Later in the book, however, Cobbett reverses this position. The real work of his life is his labour in the cause of reform: "Let not my countrymen, who may happen to read this suppose, that these, or any other pursuits will withdraw my attention from, or slacken my zeal in, that cause, which is common to us all. That cause claims, and has, my first attention and best exertion; that is the *business* of my life. These other pursuits are my *recreation*" (*A Year's Residence* 145). His experience of working with his hands gives him credibility as a farmer, but it also shores up his political writings by anchoring them in material production. In his *Grammar*, Cobbett takes on a very different persona from that of *A Year's Residence*--a self-taught grammarian, rather than a downright farmer--but he makes the same move: first, he establishes the primacy of material production and then insists on the greater importance of writing, so long as that writing remains in touch with the soil.

Though Hazlitt was exaggerating when he said that Cobbett's *Grammar* was "as entertaining as a story book" (*Complete Works* 8: 53), the *Grammar* is entertaining, and this in great part is because the examples Cobbett chooses to illustrate a grammatical principle often do double duty to illustrate political ones. It is in this way that he indirectly takes up the question of the relationship of writing to bodily labour. Hence, when he models the conjugation of a regular verb, he chooses the verb to work: I work, You work, we work, and so on; and to demonstrate that the present participle can be used as a verb, noun, or adjective he gives the following sentence: "I am working; working is laudable; a working man is more worthy of respect than a titled pensioner who lives in idleness" (59-60, 117, 123). Cobbett intends, perhaps, to remind his reader that his own work of writing is as legitimate as any other trade or employment, and that William Cobbett is certainly not idling on the taxes of the people while he composes his *Grammar of the English Language*. A few pages on, when he explains the correct use of the demonstrative pronoun, the example he chooses comments more directly on the division of mental and manual labour:

"*They*, who can write, save a great deal of bodily labour," is very different from, "*Those* who can write, save a great deal of bodily labour." The *those* stands for [. . .] any *persons in general*, who can write; whereas the *they*, as here used, relates to some particular person; and the sentence means, that these particular persons are able to write, and, by that means, they save a great deal of bodily labour. (101)

Cobbett intimates that he is working, yet he is also among those who by writing save themselves physical labour. Cobbett neglects to say here whether writing is as laudable as the labour that occurs in the fields. What, the reader might ask, is the significance of "save" in this passage?

In the *Grammar*, Cobbett attacked the learned fellows of the two universities who do not contribute anything to society and "live by the sweat of other people's brows" (74-5). Again, in 1821, Cobbett claimed that book learning was viewed by parents as a means of enabling their own children to escape their share of bodily labour: "The taste of the times is, unhappily, to give to children something of book-learning, with a view of placing them to live, in some way or other, upon the labour of other people" (*Cottage Economy* 6). Toward the end of his life he even suggested that all mental labourers were, at least according to the letter of divine command, defectors from the land:

We are all, we who are at anything else, *deserters* from the plough. God said to mankind: "this is ground, there are ploughs, *use the latter* on the former, and bread and meat and flax and wool and leather and wood shall come; and you shall eat, drink, be clad and be lodged." So that this was the business of us all; and all who do not follow it are, in fact, *deserters*. (*CPR* 81 [29. 09. 1833]: 827)

The land is where the real labour is done, and those who have been able by good fortune or "extraordinary powers of mind" to escape the land have a responsibility to those left behind (*Cottage Economy* 7).

As in his *Year's Residence*, however, while he recognises the priority of work on the land, Cobbett also maintains in his *Grammar* that writing is the most valuable labour of all; by working with the pen, he can be of more service to mankind than by digging the soil, for history shows that "tyranny has no enemy so formidable than the pen" (32). Facility with language gives the writer influence, the capacity to transform the lives of others, and the chance to assault the powerful. In Cobbett's eyes, talent is meritorious only when it is allied to exertion in the cause of truth and justice, knowledge only when applied to help the weak and oppressed. Mental labour is valuable in the extent to which it supports the poorer portion of the community (29-31):

Never, therefore, esteem men merely on account of their riches, or their station. Respect goodness, find it where you may. Honour talent wherever you behold it unassociated with vice; but honour it most where accompanied with exertion, and especially where exerted in the cause of truth and justice; but, above all, when it steps forward to protect defenceless innocence against the attacks of powerful guilt. (151)

The reason why a surgeon's labour is more valuable than a thatcher's--and, by the same token, why a lawyer's labour is more valuable than that of a surgeon, a statesman's than a lawyer's--is that it brings greater benefits to more members of the community. Just as great acquirements are potentially more laudable, however, so their misuse is more deserving of censure, and this holding to account of the powerful was, for Cobbett, the particular role and responsibility of the press (30-1).

One political motive of the *Grammar* is to undercut the assumed intellectual superiority of the ruling classes. In 1823 Cobbett added a chapter called "Six Lessons Intended to prevent Statesmen from Using False Grammar and from Writing in an Awkward Manner," in which he gives specimens of defective writing by contemporary politicians and literary men. The purpose of his often amusing and sometimes nit-picking criticism of the writings and speeches of politicians and men-of-letters is to demonstrate the deficiency of the nation's rulers "in that sort of talent which appears to me necessary in men intrusted with great affairs" (152). Neither title nor great wealth was proof of great ability (153). An expensive education and a knowledge of the learned languages are not enough to prevent men from writing faulty English, though the same privileges may be used to legitimate the possession of power (89, 105, 117). By exposing the blunders of politicians and literary men, Cobbett shows that the wrong people are in the positions of power. In his criticism of one of Castlereagh's writings, for instance, Cobbett concludes by exclaiming: "What can you say of such a man, but that nature might have made him for a valet, for a strolling player, and possibly for an auctioneer; but never for a Secretary of State!" (168). Similarly, he writes of Lord Hardwicke, the president of the Board of Agriculture, that he "ought to be working in the field or mending his Majesty's High-ways" (*A Year's Residence in the United States* 115-16).⁸ Saving bodily labour by writing was only legitimate for those who use their intellectual capacity in a responsible way. At the same time, and not just incidentally, Cobbett's purpose is to demonstrate his own superiority as a writer and thinker to those who presumed to be the nation's natural ruling class. "How

many false pretenders to erudition have I exposed to shame merely by my knowledge of grammar!" he later claimed: "How many of the insolent and ignorant great and powerful have I pulled down and made little and despicable!" (*Advice to Young Men* 48-9).

Basic literacy, then, would benefit all members of society. The stated intention of the *Grammar* was to impart a knowledge of correct writing and speaking to all classes. Literacy would enable the common people themselves to expose the intellectual pretensions of the ruling classes. As the editors of the 1983 reprint *Grammar of the English Language* assert, Cobbett has political motives for teaching the rudiments of accurate usage to his countrymen: by showing them how to "write clearly and precisely he hoped to develop their critical sense and so, as it were, inoculate them against political oppression" (9).⁹ On the other hand, there is a strategy in the book of demystifying book-learning, by pointing out that facility with language was no different to any other skill that arises from the specialisation of employment. Ignorance is not a want of ability to speak correctly, Cobbett argues, but a want of knowledge of your particular trade or profession. A plough-boy is not to be called ignorant if he is unable to read or if he speaks ungrammatically, since what one demands of a plough-boy is that he can plough a straight line (*Advice to Young Men* 42-3, 131). Knowledge of grammar, Cobbett insists, is what society requires of those professions, such as of men-of-letters, scholars, and politicians, who make their living by the manipulation of words (*Grammar* 96). The suggestion here is that the agricultural workers cannot be expected to learn to read and write.

The reference to the illiterate plough-boy, who is yet able to plough a straight line, supports Cobbett's criticism of inept politicians; at the same time, in demonstrating his own ability as a grammarian, Cobbett shows that he is able to handle the writer's tools with the same facility that a plough-boy handled a plough. However, while the plough-boy is a convenient rhetorical device, it is not clear whether or not Cobbett actually believed that the plough-boy should or could be educated out of his condition. While the full title for the *Grammar* implies that Cobbett intended his book to be "for the use of Schools and of young persons in general; but more especially for the use of Soldiers, Sailors, Apprentices, and Plough-boys," his rhetoric and mode of address in the book suggest that he had in mind, primarily, the middle classes whom he was trying to educate to use their talents responsibly in the cause of political reform. As the editors of the *Grammar* point out, although *A Grammar of the English Language* sold very well--50,000 by the end of 1822 in Britain and the United States--the price of two shillings and sixpence would have been out of the reach of a farm labourer, and it is probable that the book was read primarily by the middle classes and by the better-off artisans (13, 18). Although Cobbett claims to be addressing the plough-boy, the rural labourer is mainly a figure of speech through which Cobbett addresses to his middle class readers his criticism of the political abuses of literacy.¹⁰

In the chapter in the *Grammar* on figurative language, Cobbett uses a metaphor that reinforces the idea that words and the rules of grammar are the tools of a writer's or an orator's trade, when he remarks that rhetoric is an especially dangerous tool and that it should be used sparingly: "figures of rhetorick are edge tools and two

edge tools too. Take care how you touch them, [. . .] if you use figures of rhetorick, you ought to take care that they do not make a nonsense of what you say, nor excite the ridicule of those to whom you write [. . .]. Beware of them!" (*Grammar* 150-1). Just as he delights in showing that politicians and literary men are unable to employ grammar accurately, so he demonstrates that they are unable to handle figurative language with any skill. He makes notable use of this strategy in a famous article, his "Letter to Parson Malthus on the rights of the poor; and on the cruelty recommended by him to be exercised towards the poor," written in February 1819 while Cobbett was still resident in the United States.

In his *Essay on the Principle of Population*, Thomas Malthus had argued that because of the constant pressure of food shortages on population growth, mankind was condemned to a perpetual cycle of misery. From his premise that the rate of population growth must always be far greater than the rate of increase of the food supply, Malthus arrived at the conclusion--which, while it was derided by radicals like Cobbett and Hazlitt, achieved enormous cultural influence--that "the difficulty of subsistence" was a decisive argument against "the possible existence of a society, all the members of which should live in ease, happiness and comparative leisure" (71-2). The first edition of Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population*, published in 1798, was a polemic against Godwin's utopianism, demonstrating, by purportedly scientific means, that "in the vain endeavour to attain what in the nature of things is impossible, we now sacrifice not only possible but certain benefits" (102). Malthus repeatedly refers to his discovery of the disproportion between the increase in production and the

increase in reproduction as a natural law; the *Essay* makes unbridled use of phrases such as the law of nature, the nature of things, the strong law of necessity (72). This was the element of the *Essay* that provided ammunition for those who wanted to argue on ideological grounds that the poor had no right to relief. While Malthus did not explicitly argue that it would be wrong to introduce any measures to relieve the condition of the poor, he did suggest that such well-intentioned policies were futile in the face of the inescapable operation of his natural law. Malthus' stance in the essay, rather like Burke's in the *Scarcity* pamphlet, is that of a realist reluctantly submitting to evidence that confounds his sentiments. He argued, for example, that the English poor-law system, though humanely meant, tended to further depress the poor in two ways: by giving an incentive to increasing population without a corresponding increase in food supply and by removing incentives to industry through making the labourers dependent on the state (99-100). If there was no work for the poor, or if there was work but only at a below-subsistence wage, it was interfering with the laws of nature to supplement their earnings; doing so would only enable them to marry, procreate, and bring yet more unwanted labourers to the job market, and to place still more strain on the price of subsistence. It is not difficult to see how Malthus' supposedly "scientific" refutation of Godwinism could also serve quasi-objective support for a laissez-faire market in labour, in which the balance of supply and demand fixed the price for labour. Malthus revised his gloomy predictions in later editions of his essay, but this did not deter others from latching on to his arguments and his rhetoric to question the point of any social amelioration whatsoever.

Malthusian principles buttressed arguments against the poor laws throughout the first three decades of the nineteenth century; Cobbett attacked Malthus because his refutation of utopian thought was an apology for the poverty of the labourer.¹¹ In answer to poor law amenders, Cobbett could, as he did in his *Legacy to Labourers* (1834), argue historically, to show that the right to relief was a legal right enshrined in the constitution. In his 1819 reply, however, his strategy is to turn Malthus' rhetoric back on him by arguing that in the law of nature there would be no security of property at all, because the land originally belonged to all in common. The poor would be justified, therefore, in helping themselves to the common produce of nature to provide for themselves and their families (*CPR* 34 [8. 05. 1819]: 1024-6). Cobbett asserts that the poor have a natural right to subsistence off the land; they have a right to take whatever they need in order to keep themselves alive: "the law of nature bids man to take whenever he can find it, whatever is necessary to life, health, and ease" (1026). Cobbett attacks Malthus by unraveling his sophistry: "I'm glad, however, that you blundered upon the law of nature; because that is the very ground, on which I mean to start in endeavouring clearly to establish the right of the poor" (1027). Malthus blunders on the ploy of the law of nature in order to reinforce his weak arguments, and Cobbett shows that Malthus has drowned in rhetorical depths. Cobbett argues, following Locke, that men leave that state of nature for their mutual benefit. But if any men, or class of men, are worse off in society than when in the state of nature, then the social compact is dissolved since there can be no social compact that does not guarantee men the right to live by their labour (1028-32). The law of nature

bids men to procure a sufficiency for themselves and their children by helping themselves to the produce of the land. This was sufficient demonstration, Cobbett argued, that the security of property rested on the poor having enough food and clothing.

Ian Dyck notes Cobbett's strategy of attempting to "recover for popular culture the proverbs and adages that had been appropriated by the elite, such as the quotation from the scriptures, which was used by the opponents of outdoor relief: "if any shall not work, neither shall he eat" (194). According to Cobbett, it was particularly immoral to deny relief to the poor when there were untold numbers of government placemen living off the fruits of the their labour. British society had reversed the scriptural maxim, since it was now those who worked who did not eat, while those who did not work consumed far too much. Cobbett's strategy is to unpack the rhetoric by which the ruling classes had justified the oppression and impoverishment of the labourers. Occasionally, he is very amusing: "The pension list," he writes in *Advice to Young Men*, "may be justly regarded as the poor-book of the aristocracy" (118). At the same time, Cobbett is also advancing evidence of his own facility with the writer's tools, showing, in this instance, that he is a superior workman to Malthus.

Cobbett makes brilliant use of this strategy in his "Letter from the Labourers [. . .] to Alexander Baring, the Loanmonger." Baring had argued in the House of Commons against changing the system of nominating MPs, against giving the people the right to nominate all the members of parliament instead of having half nominated by the people and half by the aristocracy. To put this additional power in the hands of

the people, Baring argued, would be to give them an unlimited power. Cobbett cites Baring's speech at length in his *Register*, italicizing those figures of speech which he intended to take up in his reply:

True it was that the Commons had not, at present, unlimited power. It might be compared to *a man with one hand tied behind him*; the people required that the other hand should be released, and the rational answer was, "*No: he is a violent dangerous fellow, and is not to be trusted with the use of both his hands.*" If the other hand were released, it would be employed in the destruction of the people who demanded that it should be set at liberty. (Cheers.) The people ought only to have that degree of power which was *consistent with their own interests*; and it was at least perilous to destroy the fabric which had *fostered their industry, and protected their liberties*. The *people were no more to be trusted with power than children with edge-tools*. (CPR 73 [1. 09. 1831]: 612).

Speaking in the voice of the labourers themselves, Cobbett makes short work of Baring's rhetoric, and at the same time illustrates his precept from the *Grammar* that figurative language is itself an edge tool. In the hands of incompetent practitioners like Baring, indeed, it is a tool liable to be used to inflict rhetorical self-harm. Baring argued that the proposed reform of the Commons would amount to giving the politically irresponsible commoners the use of two hands, and that they were not yet to be trusted with this additional power. This analogical reasoning was spurious, Cobbett asseverated. What would be said, Cobbett asks, if the labourers went to work with one

hand behind their back or went to war with one hand behind their back? When the labourers are called upon to labour for the rich, or to fight for them, they are not considered too dangerous in the possession of really dangerous tools like swords and bayonets (613). Baring implied that reform would put too much power in the hands of ordinary labourers, though he himself is kept in his privileged situation by that same power: the work of the labourers' hands (619-20). Speaking throughout in the voice of the labourers ("we"), Cobbett goes on to show that the labourers are politically mature because they understand fully the real reasons for their misery (620-21). As in his reply to the "shallow and muddle-headed" Malthus, Cobbett demonstrates that it is Baring who is barely competent to be let loose with the edge tool of language. In both articles, Cobbett shows his own superiority to the enemies of the labouring poor who advanced specious arguments against giving the poor their economic and political rights. In the letter to Baring, Cobbett speaks in the voice of the labourers and uses the pronoun "we" in order to show that the labourers not only know something of their own trade but can teach Baring a thing or two about his occupation. The article works so well because by speaking in the voice of the labourers, by using the collective pronoun, Cobbett suggests that the labourers are becoming politically and linguistically adept. He simultaneously assumes that the labourers are enlightened and continues the process of their political education. The "we" might also include Cobbett, however, and it this ambiguity that cinches the article's rhetorical achievement. Manual and mental labourers--the labourers and Cobbett himself--are gathered into political union

through the resemblance between a writer's tools and the real edge tools handled by physical labourers.

George Spater remarks upon an "evolutionary development" in Cobbett's writings for the *Register* after his emigration to the United States in 1817. Although he still advocated peaceful methods of Reform, Cobbett talks increasingly of retribution and the right of resistance, and his writings "could be interpreted as incitements to use force" (369). "He encourages in the multitude the worst possible human passion revenge," wrote Mary to Percy Shelley in September 1817, "or, as he would give it, that abominable christian name retribution" (*Letters* 1: 49). The basis of Cobbett's radicalism is the position outlined in the letter to Malthus, that the workers have a right to bread with or without labour, because the right of self-preservation and the right to a subsistence off the land is the first and fundamental law. While Cobbett had always urged that the right to outdoor relief was a constitutional right under an Elizabethan statute providing for the poor, following 1817 he explicitly drew from his labour theory of value the full implications of the Lockean tenet that all property rights originate in labour bestowed on the land.

In his second of his *Two Treatises of Government* (1690), Locke had argued that the ends of political society and government are the mutual protection of property, that is, of life, liberty, and estate (para. 123-31). People enter into society because, in the state of nature, the property they acquire is insecure. Locke's state of nature is a state of equality. Men (the gendered noun is no accident) can earn the right to own property by mixing their labour with nature, but since no-one can engross more

possession than he can use without violating the law of nature, there will always be enough land for everyone. Only by the use of money or some non-perishable instrument of exchange can individuals appropriate more property than they can make immediate use of; only by mutual consent (to the value of money) do people agree to a "disproportionate and unequal possession of the earth" (para. 47-50). It follows that all members of a community will consent, at least tacitly, to this state of inequality, if they feel themselves better off than they would have been in a precarious state of equality. However, the first law of nature remained that of self preservation: "God and Nature never [allow] a man so to abandon himself as to neglect his own preservation" (para. 168). If someone finds himself worse off in civil society than he would have been had he stayed in the law of nature, then, Locke implies, political society can be dissolved by the same principle of self-preservation and self-interest by which it was inaugurated: "since no rational creature can be supposed to change his condition with an intention to be worse" (para. 131). Locke denies that this lays a "perpetual foundation for disorder" since the principle only operates when "the inconvenience is so great that the majority feel it, and are weary of it, and find a necessity to have it amended" (para. 168). Increasingly, Cobbett felt that this point had been reached.¹²

In *A Legacy to Labourers* (1834) Cobbett gives his most detailed exposition of the revolutionary implications of Locke's doctrine by claiming that the majority were reaching a state where self-preservation demanded that they revert to a state of nature. If the labourers were not able gain a subsistence from the land for their labour then they had a right to the land itself. The right to preserve life is more fundamental than

the right of property, and, therefore, Cobbett implies that the rights of the labourer override those of the landlord. "A nation may exist without landlords; but without labourers, not only its political, but its physical, existence is impossible" (*A Legacy to Labourers* 139). Without labour there can be no food or shelter or clothing for anyone, and "a farm is worth no more than an equal number of acres of the sea, or of the air" (138). The government has no right to take away by taxes the fruits of the labourers in order to support the sinecurist placemen who lived in idleness; to the landlords' claim that they must keep rents high because the government takes away their profit in taxes, Cobbett answers that the landlords should withhold the payment of taxes rather than pass on the burden to the labourer: "This is a matter with which the labourer has nothing to do" (139). The new poor-law, it was being urged by its apologists, was designed to protect estates from being broken up by the expense of providing relief, but Cobbett contended that by telling the poor that they must rely on their own resources, the poor-law commission was inviting them to help themselves to what they needed to survive (132-3, 136). The new law dissolves the social compact, and was, effectively, the end of property, not its security (124, 128, 140).¹³

The basis of Cobbett's position was Locke's dictum that labour on the land is the original foundation of all property (*Legacy* 45, 47; *CPR* 71 [29. 01. 1831]: 288). But what of those who work with their minds, writers and other professional men? Can they have a right of ownership, too? I have already emphasised that Cobbett was beset by the question of what kind of activity writing is. Occasionally, he asserts that writing and thinking are just as valid as any other kind of labour: "A man has a

property in his writings, [. . .] and what are these but his labour?" (*CPR* 32 [2. 08. 1817]: 574). Elsewhere he writes as though there was a fundamental distinction to be made: "the order of the world demands that some shall think, while others work" (*CPR* 71 [29. 01. 1831]: 287). Here, in *The Legacy to Labourers*, he dexterously suggests that the labours of the mind are different from but analogous to physical labour. In Locke's society, the right of non-manual labourers to property arises through common consent to use money as a medium of exchange. Cobbett accepts this argument but tries to show that the right of ownership through exchange is derived by an analogy with the original right. The claim of mental labourers to own property is founded in the original right: "The capacity to labour with the mind is the gift of God as completely as is the capacity to labour with the hands, [. . .] hence, the foundation of their property is labour as completely *as if* they had first broken up the earth, subdued it, and made it fruitful by the labour of their bodies" (emphasis added) (45-9). The simile is meant to suggest that money earned and given in exchange is as valid a source of property as the labour bestowed on the land had been in the state of nature. In Cobbett's hands, however, mental work is made to sound like a poor imitation of that original right; the metaphor nicely captures his sense of the equivocal connection of mental labourers to the primary labour on the land.

Cobbett's project, I have argued, is to diminish the distance implied by that "as if," by claiming that his writings return, albeit indirectly, to help fructify the land. Cobbett makes amends for his dependence upon the labour of others by putting his own labour at the service of manual workers; as the manual labour sustains the writer

so the author's works return, in some measure, to ease the labours of the physical labourers. As I have argued, one way in which Cobbett believes his writings help the common labourers is by his constant attack on their oppressors. He also conceived that his writings could be of more direct benefit to the poor. *Cottage Economy* was first published in 1821-22 in seven parts at two pence a part, a price that put it within the range of the intended audience of labourers, and was published as a complete book in 1822. The work sold 100,000 copies in the first ten years (Spater 437-8), and this would have delighted Cobbett, who envisioned *Cottage Economy* as a practical guide to be carried into the fields, where his instruction would be of immediate benefit to the labourers (*Cottage Economy* 102).

In the opening pages of *Cottage Economy*, Cobbett points out that Britain's labourers are living in poverty amidst the abundance which they themselves have produced (2-4). But there is no reason why the labouring poor should not have an "abundant living" (4). The basis of good living is skillful labour and Cobbett's book shows the labourer how to turn his labour to the best account (9). Cobbett's purpose was to teach traditional, though lost, skills--such as brewing beer, making bread, or keeping a cow on forty rods of ground--which would provide the rural household with the wherewithal to make an independent living, and make it less dependent on commercial products (Gilmartin, "This is very material" 81). This material sufficiency or good living is also related to political independence, since a man's skill and ability as a labourer render him stronger and more independent as well as better off financially (*Cottage Economy* 63). Dependence of any kind favors tyranny: "I despise the man

that is poor and contented; for such a content is a certain proof of a base disposition, a disposition which is the enemy of all industry, all exertion, all love of independence" (2-3). Cobbett's advice to the labouring poor in *Cottage Economy* appears to recommend self-help and honest toil (8, 10); in fact, as Dyck points out, Cobbett's counsel to the poor was sometimes misread, by the well-off, as an ethical imperative which acquitted the ruling class of any social obligation (107-8). In improving the skill of the labourer, however, Cobbett was not trying to improve the labourer's productivity in order to benefit the employer. His goal, rather, was to show them how to "jostle" closer to the land: to give wage labourers a degree of security from the vicissitudes of their employment and to cushion them from the government's appropriation of the fruits of labour via the tax on commodities. Cobbett's attempt to increase the self-reliance of the workers was opposed in its political and economic suppositions to the interests of agrarian capitalism, since a self-sufficient rural populace would undermine that dependence on wage-employment which capitalism needed (Dyck 108-9). Cobbett is at his most Spencean when he insists that access to the land was the foundation of political as well as economic independence, and when he criticises the enclosure movement for shutting out the poor from the commons (*Cottage Economy* 57, 81, 90-1; Dyck 109, 123).¹⁴

Cottage Economy contains one of Cobbett's swipes at book-learning: giving children book education is evidence of a desire to help them live "upon the labour of other people" (6). Schooling merely makes the children of the labouring classes conceited, spoiling them as labourers, as well as keeping them servile (7). "[N]ine-

tenths of us are, from the very nature and necessities of the world," Cobbett asserted "born to gain our livelihood by the sweat of the brow" (7). At the same time, Cobbett himself is obviously one of those endowed with "extraordinary powers of mind," who has had the opportunity to develop those powers and to save himself the unpleasantness of bodily labour (7). Cobbett's defence would certainly have been that his writings had been instrumental in bettering the material conditions of the poor. He frequently compares the superior utility of his own writings to religious tracts and sermons, by pointing out how many poor families had benefited from his directions, in *Cottage Economy*, on how to establish a cottage industry in straw-plat. He finds one family who have increased their combined income by six shillings a week by plaiting straw to make bonnets: "This is indisputably my work; and when I reflect that there must necessarily be, now, some hundreds, and shortly, many thousands of families, in England, who are and will be, through my means, living well instead of being half-starved; I cannot but feel myself consoled" (*Rural Rides* 136-7). How long will it be, he demands, before the entire London press "do as much good as my pen has done *in this one instance*" (184). While a Methodist parson, for example, might concern himself with the moral improvement of the poor, Cobbett argued that good conduct followed from a full stomach: "I will allow nothing to be good, with regard to the Labouring classes, unless it make an addition to their victuals, drink, or clothing. As to their *minds*, that is a much too sublime matter for me to think about" (*Rural Rides* 137). Cobbett neglects to mention here that he has a more subversive agenda:

although he puts the physical needs of the poor first, this material sufficiency served as a basis on which to build their political independence.

In his *Advice to Young Men and (Incidentally) to Young Women in the Middle and Higher Ranks of Life* (1829-30), Cobbett records that he had received many letters of gratitude from readers of his *Grammar of the English Language*, his *Cottage Economy*, and his books on Woodlands and Gardening, testifying to "the great benefit which they have derived from my labours" (6). In this same book--which Sambrook calls Cobbett's *apologia pro vita sua* (William Cobbett 156)--Cobbett recounts events from his life to illustrate other ways in which ordinary people had directly benefited from his industriousness. Thus, he describes his career as a soldier in New Brunswick in the 1780s and he tells of his rapid promotion to sergeant-major, owing to his ability to write and to his habits of "husbanding well" his time. As an officer, his early rising and industrious ways meant that the morning exercise of the regiment was finished at an early hour. When other officers were in charge the men would be doing their exercise in the heat of the day; how different on the days when Cobbett was commander:

the men had a long day of leisure before them: they could ramble into the town or into the woods; go to get raspberries, to catch birds, to catch fish, or to pursue another recreation [. . .]. So that here, arising solely from the early habits of one very young man, were pleasant and happy days given to hundreds. (40-1)

For Nattrass this passage displays a "glorious disregard for the work-ethic" (203).

Another reading might be to think of the passage as defining more precisely what counts as valuable labour. The passage shows how Cobbett's industry eased the burden of the fairly useless labour of military exercise on others, allowing them to get on with the more fundamental labour of supplementing a meagre diet. As in *Cottage Economy*, Cobbett imagines his labours multiplying to supply the whole community with an "abundant" living. It is worth considering *Advice to Young Men* in more detail, for, in this book, Cobbett defends the view expressed in the *Grammar of the English Language*: that the pen is the greatest foe of tyranny and that writing is the most valuable labour of all. At the same time *Advice* continues to vent Cobbett's suspicion that mental work was only equivocally connected to real (physical) labour.

Advice to Young Men was published in 14 monthly parts in 1829-30, its price of sixpence-a-part directing it at a wealthier audience than that intended for *Cottage Economy*. Cobbett says that the object of the book is to communicate knowledge which will add to the "personal ease and happiness" of the middle classes (1-2). Happiness is to be found only in independence (9-10), and the source of independence is to depend on your own exertions for your own living (10). Turning on the middle classes the moral imperatives directed at the poor, Cobbett tells them that they have no right to live in the world without doing work of some sort or another; to want to live off the labour of others is tantamount to fraud or theft (9). But whereas *Cottage Economy*, addressed to the lower classes, viewed book-learning as a way of avoiding labour, *Advice to Young Men*, addressed to those, like Cobbett himself, who might live

by their literary talent, concedes that mental labour is a valid way of making a living (59-60). Book learning is essential to the kinds of professional occupations where one might be of great assistance to other members of the community (270-1).

As in *Cottage Economy*, Cobbett's theme is the independence of his audience, but now the audience is assumed to be the enfranchised part of the community or middle-class professionals, people like Cobbett himself who had escaped, by talent or good fortune, from a life of bodily labour. Independence here refers less to the material self-sufficiency of the poor than to autonomy from power, and to the conditions under which useful intellectual work was possible. Again, as in *Cottage Economy*, Cobbett recommends parsimony or thrift as the source of independence. He acknowledges that the middle ranks are not living close to the poverty line and what threatens their finances is a false pride, and the desire to imitate the consumption habits of the rich (11, 14-18). The condition for intellectual freedom is freedom from poverty, not only because thinking is hampered by financial care, but also because fear of poverty--or, more exactly, the desire for comfort and ease--leads intellectuals to abandon principles for expediency and to serve the powerful (12, 58-9). Cobbett gives the example of William Gifford, former editor of the *Quarterly Review*, a man of genuine intellectual attainments, who was allured by the promise of a comfortable living into being "a sinecurist, a pensioner, and a hack" (60-1). Cobbett also takes aim at the writings of Burke, Johnson, and Shakespeare. All these writers have attempted to deceive the people about the nature of power in order to keep them enslaved, and they were all "in one shape or another, paid by oppressors out of means squeezed from

the people" (295-8). Political independence could be secured by working for one's living and living within one's means; this would allow literary men to exercise their influence on behalf of the oppressed.¹⁵

In *Advice to Young Men*, as in the *Grammar of the English Language*, Cobbett extols the ability to write, both because it is the source of his influence, and because it is the foundation of his autonomy; writing gives him an independent source of livelihood (51-2). The final paragraph of *Advice to Young Men*, a passage which Cobbett quotes from his own *Grammar*, makes this point:

With English and French on your tongue and in your pen, you have a resource, not only greatly valuable in itself, but a recourse that you can be deprived of by none of those changes and chances which deprive men of pecuniary possessions, and which, in some cases, make the purse-proud man of yesterday a crawling sycophant of today. (334; *Grammar* 151)

Writing is a trade which allows one a degree autonomy from the state and from the rich and powerful, as long as one is content to work for one's living and is not lured by the trappings of wealth to accept a state pension. Cobbett's identification of the grounds of a writer's independence is apparently corroborated by a reference to Rousseau. Cobbett declares himself to be in agreement with Rousseau, who had observed that the artisan or craftsman is the most independent of all men "because he carries about, in his own hands and person, the means of gaining his livelihood;" furthermore, Cobbett adds, the more common the articles he produces, the more perfect his independence (307-8). The passage from the *Grammar* cited above, on the

autonomy of the writer, seems to align the writer with other craftsmen who carry about on their own persons the means of their livelihood.

Paradoxically, however, the reference to Rousseau establishes not that the writer has the same means of earning his livelihood, but that he has no means of independence whatsoever. Cobbett argues in *Advice to Young Men* that the price one pays for "exemption from [. . .] bodily labour" is dependence of one kind or another (307-8). Since a writer does not produce anything materially useful with his hands, he must rely for his food and clothing either on the labouring classes, or on the state. A writer may earn fame or riches, but he sacrifices the certainty of independence to be found in humbler life (308). In the most fundamental sense, all intellectuals are, by Cobbett's reckoning, dependent on the people who support their physical existence. This places all writers and intellectuals uncomfortably in the same situation as the pensioned writer living off the taxes paid by the labourer. All writers, then, have a moral responsibility to give something back to the labourers: "To those who labour, we, who labour not with our hands, owe all that we eat, drink and wear; all that shades us by day, and that shelters us by night [. . .] and therefore, if we possess talent for the task, we are ungrateful or cowardly or both, if we omit any effort within our power to prevent them from being slaves" (323-4). The appeal to Rousseau supports two different positions: Cobbett's labour is both the source of his independence, insofar as he claims to have earned his living by his trade, and the source of his dependence, in that he concedes that he owes his material existence to the more material labour of others. Once again we find Cobbett's ambivalence about the toil of the mind. *Advice to*

Young Men is the book where Cobbett defends most strongly the utility of the life of the mind, and the book is all about the opportunity which a writer has for an independent existence. However, even in this his *apologia*, Cobbett cannot avoid feeling that writing and thinking are not as authentic as bodily labour. Exemption from manual labour again takes the sense of having somehow escaped or evaded one's fair share of the real work.

As if to make amends for this desertion, Cobbett often imagines defecting from writing back to the land. In *Advice to Young Men*, Cobbett recounts an incident, from his time as a soldier in Canada, when he met a young farmer's daughter whose family lived in the woods of New England. Cobbett is enchanted, not only, or even primarily, by the girl, but by the North American landscape, the simple rustic manners and way of life of the independent New Englanders. At the time, Cobbett relates, he was engaged to be married to Anne ("Nancy") Reid, his future wife, who was in England awaiting his return. This is how Cobbett presents his dilemma: "Here was the present against the absent: here was the power of the eyes pitted against that of memory, [. . .] here was the spot of all spots in the world, and here were also the life, and the manners and the habits and the pursuits that I delighted in" (146). Eventually the young Cobbett decides against the rural idyll, and determines to return to England, to his future wife, and to his destiny as political writer. Cobbett reflects, in *Advice to Young Men*, on the uncertainty of fate; if his fiancée had but let him know, by a letter, of some lack of affection on her part, his destiny might have lain in the North American woods:

Young as I was; able as I was as a soldier; proud as I was of the admiration and commendations of which I was the object; fond as I was, too, of the command, which, at so early an age, my rare conduct and great natural talents had given me; sanguine as was my mind, and brilliant as were my prospects: yet I had seen so much of the meannesses, the unjust partialities, the insolent pomposity, the disgusting dissipations of that way of life, that I was weary of it: I longed, exchanging my fine laced coat for the Yankee farmer's homespun, to be where I should never behold the supple crouch of servility, and never hear the hectoring voice of authority again; and, on the lonely banks of this branch-covered creek, which contained (she out of the question) everything congenial to my taste and dear to my heart, I, unapplauded, unfeared, unenvied and uncalumniated, should have lived and died. (149-50)

There is a constant refrain in Cobbett's writing which regrets the loss of humble anonymity. In this mood, the success, fame, and relative freedom from want that have been his lot as a writer are not sufficient compensation for the loss of simplicity and independence which are to be found only in humbler occupations. Hence, Cobbett laments that he did not remain on the land--"I have never desired to have any rank, station or name, or calling, more and other than that of a farmer"--and he speaks longingly of the benefits of bodily labour: "It is free from the torments of ambition, and from a great part of the causes of ill health" (Reitzel 226, *Cottage Economy* 8).¹⁶

Cobbett also imagines discovering, in an alliance with other labourers, a more

satisfactory form of community, unblemished by the envy and ambition that he finds in the putative republic of letters.¹⁷

The counter-appeal of writerly distinction and laborious anonymity is, I suggest, another manifestation of the warring impulses of egotism and self-effacement in Cobbett's writing. As I noted earlier, Cobbett sometimes stressed the agency of the labourers themselves and thereby down-played his achievements. In his writings on parliamentary reform, for example, Cobbett gave the working classes credit for instructing him as much as he instructed them. In *Advice to Young Men*, while Cobbett boasts of his own great labours, we again see evidence of this self-effacement when he gives credit for what he has achieved to his wife and children.¹⁸ Had he remained a bachelor, he states, he would not have performed a "thousandth part of those labours which have been, and are, in spite of all political prejudice, the wonder of all who have seen or heard of them" (101). This point is reinforced: "A fourth part of the labours I have performed never would have been performed if I had not been a married man" (206); and, again: "I had other and strong motives [. . .] but after all a very large part of my nearly a hundred volumes may be fairly ascribed to the wife and children" (206); once more: "I might have done something, but, perhaps, but a thousandth part of what I have done [. . .]. I have always said that if my country feel any gratitude for my labours, that gratitude is due to her as full as much as to me" (206-7).¹⁹ At the same time as Cobbett disperses the credit for his literary achievements, however, he also claims to have shared in the domestic labours of his wife. His time at home was, he avows, "chiefly divided between the pen and the baby" (157, 176). If Nancy Cobbett

was responsible to a large degree for Cobbett's achievement, then, by the same token, Cobbett does not hesitate to say that he partook of what he deemed the woman's work and "rendered the mother's labour as light [he] could" (157, 235). By "mother's labour" Cobbett means child-care rather than child-birth, but the ambiguity is perhaps intentional. It is as though a more authentic, because more bodily, form of labour serves as a ballast for the deracinated activity of writing. Cobbett partly effaces his own talents, but only to anchor himself in a more essential, rudimentary and elemental form of labour.

The tension between his literary egotism and his longing for obscurity continues even in Cobbett's anticipation of his own death and after-life. In the dedication to his last book, *A Legacy to Labourers* (1834), Cobbett hoped that his book would be bought in every parish in the kingdom and would be to the labouring classes the "most useful and faithful companion," reminding the labourers of their rights and explaining to them the causes of their oppression (9). He explained the title thus:

I call it a LEGACY, because I am sure, that [. . .] long after I shall be laid under the turf [. . .] this little book will be an inmate of the cottages of England, and will remind the working people, whenever they shall read it, or see it, that they once had a friend, whom neither the love of gain, on the one hand, nor the fear of loss, on the other, could seduce from his duty towards God, towards his country, and towards them; will remind them that friend was born in a cottage and bred to the plough. (41-2)

Cobbett imagines his posthumous fame and, simultaneously, erases his gigantic presence; he lives on and, as it were, lies low. His political writings are his monument, commemorating the cottager and ploughman who became a political writer; but the passage also realises his desire to "jostle" himself closer to the land. As his writings continue to speak to the labouring classes, his body returns to replenish the communal soil which had nourished him.

Throughout his career, as I remarked at the beginning of this chapter, Cobbett established his competence to speak by emphasising his labourious life, by reeling off a sort of resume of his remarkable career, his progress from humble plough boy to famous public figure. Paradoxically even in the passages where he is boasting most openly of his accomplishments, the impulse to distinguish himself is undermined by a desire to efface himself, and to become one with the labourers who worked in less metaphorical fields. In a lengthy sentence from *Advice to Young Men*, which is worth quoting in its entirety, he offers a kind of précis of his achievements. What he boasts of is not talent but labour, not the quality but the quantity of his exploits:

Thrown (by my own will, indeed) on the wide world at a very early age, not more than eleven or twelve years, without money to support, without friends to advise, and without book-learning to assist me; passing a few years dependent solely on my own labour for my subsistence; then becoming a common soldier, and leading a military life, chiefly in foreign parts, for eight years; quitting that life after really, for me, high promotion, and with, for me, a large sum of money; marrying at an early age, going at once to France to

acquire the French language, thence to America; passing eight years there, becoming a bookseller and author, and taking a prominent part in all the important discussions of the interesting period from 1793 to 1799, during which there was, in that country, a continued struggle carried on between the English and the French parties; conducting myself, in the ever-active part which I took in that struggle, in such a way as to call forth marks of unequivocal approbation from the Government at home; returning to England in 1800, resuming my labours here, suffering, during these twenty-nine years, two years of imprisonment, heavy fines, three years' self-banishment to the other side of the Atlantic, and a total breaking of fortune, so as to be left without a bed to lie on, and, during these twenty-nine years of troubles and punishments, writing and publishing, every week of my life, whether in exile or not, eleven weeks only excepted, a periodical paper, containing more or less of matter worthy of public attention; writing and publishing, during the same twenty-nine years, a "*Grammar of the English Language*" of the French and another of the English language, a work on the "Economy of the Cottage," a work on "Forest Trees and Woodlands," a work on "Gardening," "An Account of America," a book of "Sermons," a work on the "Corn-plant," a "History of the Protestant Reformation;" all books of great and continued sale, and the last unquestionably the book of greatest circulation in the whole world, the Bible only excepted; having, during these same twenty-nine years of troubles and embarrassments without number, introduced into England the manufacture

of straw-plat; also several valuable trees; having introduced, during the same twenty-nine years, the cultivation of the corn-plant, so manifestly valuable as a source of food; having, during the same period, always (whether in exile or not) sustained a shop of some size in London; having, during the whole of the same period, never employed less, on an average, than ten persons, in some capacity or another, exclusive of printers, bookbinders, and others, connected with papers and books; and having, during these twenty-nine years of troubles, embarrassments, prisons, fines, and banishments, bred up a family of seven children to man's and woman's state. (2-4)

This long sentence seems to display Cobbett's enormous conceit: "Who, what man," he demanded "ever performed a greater quantity of labour than I have performed?" (26).

But he specifically disavows the idea that his deeds are the result of superior mental endowments alone: "there must be something more than genius: there must be industry: there must be perseverance: there must be, before the eyes of the nation, proofs of extraordinary exertion" (4-5). Cobbett's enumeration of his work makes mental labour as tangible, that is, as ploughing the land. In the previous chapter, I quoted the long sentence in which Burke describes the characteristics which fit a "natural aristocracy" for government of a nation's affairs. Burke's enormous sentence enacts the ability to take a "large view of the widespread and infinitely diversified combination of men and affairs in a large society" which he claims is the prerequisite for political participation (*An Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs* 129-30). In Cobbett's *Advice to Young Men*, it is not the advantage of birth or acquired

endowment but the sheer volume of labour that fits Cobbett to teach and guide. Like Burke's sentence, Cobbett's writing performs the virtues he claims to possess, and presents to "the eyes of the nation, proofs of [his] extraordinary exertion" (5).²⁰

When Cobbett boasts of his "Herculean" labour, we are meant, I think, to take him literally. His labours, he says with some justification in *Advice to Young Men*, "have been, and are [. . .] the wonder of all who have seen or heard of them" (101). We, too, may wonder at his enormous productivity, but, in rehearsing Cobbett's quantitative achievement, we are apt to overlook his ability as a writer. Spater notes this problem: "Immured within this vast edifice of words is some of the finest writing our language has produced" (2). Cobbett's contemporaries, his political opponents as well as a political fellow-traveler such as Hazlitt, certainly acknowledged his abilities as a writer and thinker. In Hazlitt's appreciation, Cobbett was "not only unquestionably the most powerful political writer of the present day, but one of the best writers in the language" (*Complete Works* 8: 65). For Southey "there never was a better or more forcible writer," and Coleridge, in a letter of 1819, spoke grudgingly of the "overmatch" of Cobbett's intellect for those of the government ministers (Spater 446; Coleridge, *Collected Letters*, volume 4: 979, 714). Several recent critics, in pointing out that Cobbett was a skillful and able writer, whose carefully-wrought texts are calculated to produce quite precise political effects, have assisted in disinterring Cobbett's reputation from the "edifice" of his labour and, more concretely, from the biases of a Romantic historiography (Nattrass 4, 9-10, 13; Gilmartin, "This is very material" 82-5). Likewise, I have assumed throughout this chapter that we must read

Cobbett with the same attention to detail, to complexity, and to paradox with which we would read Burke, Hazlitt and Carlyle. It should be noted, however, that the relative critical neglect of Cobbett between his own time and ours, the interment of his genius within the edifice of his labour, is a problem to which Cobbett himself may have contributed and an outcome he partly desired. For to point out the tension between Cobbett's quantifiable and qualitative achievements also restates the problem I have discussed in this chapter. In talking of his great writing labours, Cobbett is caught between stressing his exceptionalism and emphasising his ordinariness, between boasting of his distinctive talent, of his great and unmatched endeavours, and desiring, to embed himself, figuratively, in the community of labourers for, to, and with whom he speaks.

The paradoxical "literary labour," the "labours of the mind," is the source both of Cobbett's typicality and his uniqueness, the means by which he places himself within the industrious classes and the source of his distance from this constituency. There is a contradictory impulse, we might say, towards both embeddedness and towards individuation, a tension that Anne Janowitz has identified as a dialectic characteristic of Romanticism (1-8). This same dialectic is more explicit, as I shall argue in the next chapter, in the essays of William Hazlitt. Of all the writers I discuss, Cobbett most clearly wants to construct a political solidarity between mental workers and the labouring poor. In Hazlitt's hands the mental/ manual analogy seems almost solely a way of figuring divisions and conflicts within the literary domain. Nevertheless, I shall contend that when Hazlitt represents his literary labour through an analogy with

physical labour, he writes to counter the individualism implicit in his liberal theory of art.

Notes

¹ References to *Cobbett's Weekly Political Register* are abbreviated *CPR*, and cited by volume number, date of publication, and page number. Even after he became a radical, several critics have noted, Cobbett retained certain Burkean accents, such as his reverence for tradition, custom, and organic community. For Nattrass, for example, this is one way in which Cobbett "avoids condemning himself to the margins" of political discourse (112-18). My own view is that of Dyck, who argues that while Cobbett expressed admiration for traditional social order, including an unbroken chain of connection, the necessity of rank and gradation, and ridiculed the doctrine of equality, the eighteenth-century model he praised was "so loaded with conditioners and riders as to make it unworkable and almost meaningless as a code of social and economic behaviour" (71).

² On the social and economic background to the "Address to the Journeymen and Labourers," see Spater (341-4, 409-12).

³ Most critics agree that the specific radicalism of the cheap *Register* lies in the political education of the "swinish multitude" (Spater 347-9). A major strategy of the "Address," as Olivia Smith argues, was to define its addressee and to challenge existing definitions of that readership; the "swinish multitude" become a literate, politically thoughtful, and economically valuable part of society (227, 230). Further, as Nattrass has pointed out, in Cobbett's "Address" not only are political outsiders

included in the political nation, but political insiders are placed in the unfamiliar position of outsiders. Cobbett is, in effect, addressing two audiences at once. Although Cobbett's language becomes "increasingly colloquial" as he addresses the lower orders, he continues to speak, albeit indirectly, to the politically powerful, "by ostentatiously excluding them" (109-12, 135-6). Dyck is certainly right to say that the early cheap *Registers* are among Cobbett's most inconsistent writings as he sought to "unite workers and employers of both town and country in the reform movement" (81), but this inconsistency is what makes them interesting.

⁴ Noel Thompson summarises Cobbett's theory of labour exploitation: "the value input of the labouring class was not matched by the economic value of their wages," because the fruits of labour were being given away to the idle and unproductive members of society (113). As Thompson says, Cobbett, like other radicals, sought not to produce a labour theory of value, but to defend "the utility, dignity, status, and primacy of labour and, by association, of the labouring classes" (111-12).

⁵ Nattrass looks at Cobbett's rhetorical deployment of the singular pronouns "I" and "you," and argues that Cobbett's singular pronouns counter Burke's oppressive "we" and substitute a dialogue among living persons for a set of timeless laws (115-6).

⁶ This article is paginated separately in volume 32 of *Cobbett's Political Register*.

⁷ For an excellent example of what Gilmartin calls Cobbett's "tactical gesture of self-effacement," see *CPR* 32 (2. 08. 1817): 558-9. For a good illustration of Cobbett's bragging about his own power and influence, see "Address to the Tax-Payers of England and Scotland on the Subject of the Seat in Parliament," (*CPR* 69 [10. 04. 1830]: 452). For Gilmartin, Cobbett's contradictions are part of a more general problem for the writers of the radical reform movement: "To sustain political disaffection alongside popular affiliation was a difficult task, since the independence and personal autonomy that enabled criticism also required professional self-definitions that distinguished the writer from the community" (*Print Politics* 42). Hence, while Cobbett distinguished himself from the party hacks, the writers who sold their independence and became the Government's hirelings, he also risked separating himself from his "less enlightened readers," who could be figured simply as "passive receptacles to be informed and instructed" (42-3, 47). I agree with Gilmartin's presentation of the problem, but argue that the means by which Cobbett separates himself from the hired press--by emphasising his own labours--are the same means he employs to connect with his readers.

⁸ Again, he writes of the editor of a rival newspaper: "A spade or shovel would [. . .] become the hands of this blunderheaded editor of Bell's messenger better than a pen" (*Rural Rides* 168). Cobbett had already used the strategy of attacking his opponents' grammatical solecisms in 1794 in his "Observations on Priestley's Emigration" (33-5).

⁹ "He who writes badly thinks badly," Cobbett summarised (152).

¹⁰ The question of Cobbett attitude to extending book learning to the rural labourers has not been satisfactorily answered, because Cobbett never fully resolves a fundamental contradiction. He certainly appears to accede to the idea that the division of labour was permanent, and that poverty and inequality were inevitable. In *Cottage Economy*, for example, he insists that nine tenths of the population must work the soil and live by the sweat of their brow, and that education would spoil the labourer as a labourer (3, 7, 79). Further, he argued, explicitly at times, that poverty was necessary in order to incite industry and induce the great part of the people to endure the pain of bodily labour (*The Poor Man's Friend*, para. 90; *Advice to Young Men* 322-3; *Legacy to the Labourers* 102). However, Cobbett also says that the labourers produce a surplus, 10, or 50, or 100 times more than they consume (*Rural Rides* 304-5, 316, 319, 372; *Legacy to Labourers* 138; Spater 551-3). The problem, then, is one of distribution, not one of production, and there is, in principle, no reason why Cobbett cannot allow for the plough-boy to rise.

¹¹ Connell notes that in some respects Malthus and Cobbett were not far apart ideologically, especially in their advocacy of an agrarian politics (197-202). On the other hand, Connell recognises, the speculative economics of men like Malthus were evidence, for Cobbett, of the "attenuated grip upon the actual" of establishment politicians (207).

¹² "No man upon earth, unless he be one who lives upon the labour of others, will pretend to believe that men entered into civil society, in order that those who did no work, that lead idle lives, that created nothing, should have bread and flour and beer and clothing and all sorts of good things a hundred times more than they wanted while those that laboured and made all these things, were compelled to live upon a miserable watery root or die of starvation" (*CPR* 31 [29. 01. 1831]: 289; *CPR* 31 [12. 03. 1831]: 652).

¹³ Earlier, in *The Poor Man's Friend* (1829-30), Cobbett argued that as "stern necessity" is given as the reason for denying the poor their legal right to relief, so, as the first necessity is the preservation of life, necessity can also be given as the reason for dispensing with the laws of property (para. 88).

¹⁴ As Dyck points out, the subtext of *Cottage Economy* is that where honest means were not sufficient then the labourers were invited to revert to customary and extra-legal practices such as helping themselves to fuel and evading the game laws (114).

¹⁵ Gilmartin discusses the radicals' redefinition of independence from "money and land" to "independence of mind" (*Print Politics* 33-5, 169-71).

¹⁶ In *Rural Rides*, Cobbett constantly laments the fact that he has been torn away from a rural existence. He sees a shepherd boy in a blue smock-frock, similar to the one he wore as a boy, and this sets along a train of association and fills him with wonder that "a heart and mind so wrapped up in everything belonging to the gardens,

the fields and the woods, should have been condemned to waste themselves away amidst the stench, the noise and the strife of cities" (294). At Billingshurst, Sussex, a similar blue smock-frock makes him reflect that, but for the intervention of accident, he too would have spent his life in such surroundings. But he immediately counters his own wishes: "how many villains and fools, who have been well teased and tormented, would have slept in peace at night, and have fearlessly swaggered by day! [. . .]. Will this lively, but, at the same time, simple boy, ever become the terror of villains and hypocrites across the Atlantic?" (114-5). At another point he contemplates retirement from politics: "Why I think that I have laboured enough. Let others work now." But then he quashes that temptation with the thought of the "complete triumph that I have yet to enjoy," and he thinks of Canning and Sidmouth and the rest of that crew who would rest easier for having Cobbett in retirement (392-3). Gilmartin notes this pressure in Cobbett's writing against writing, his attempt to create a world in which his writing will not be required (*Print Politics* 190).

¹⁷ "'The race that write' are [. . .] full of envy," he complained (*CPR* 32 [22. 02. 1817]: 255). When Cobbett talks of other writers' envy of his success and popularity, he has in mind not only his political opponents, but also other radical journalists, such as Wooler, who had attacked him for deserting the reform movement when he left England for the United States in 1817 (*CPR* 32 [4 10. 1817]: 802-15).

¹⁸ Sambrook's view that "the dominant theme of *Advice to Young Men* is Cobbett's domestic happiness" is essentially correct, even while what we now know of

Cobbett's family life at this time makes this domestic bliss a literary creation rather than a true account of his situation (*William Cobbett* 159). George Spater has shown that the idealisation of his domestic life in *Advice to Young Men* takes place against the reality of his growing estrangement from his wife and children (516-23).

¹⁹ Cobbett asserts that the earnings from a man's labours are morally, if not legally, the property of the wife as much as of the husband. This ought not to obscure Cobbett's traditional and conservative views on female roles and behaviour (177, 180-1, 184, 192-6, 199).

²⁰ Cobbett says he owes more to his good habits--to industry and perseverance, to early-rising and general sobriety, to abstinence and thrift--than to his innate talents (5, 25-6, 39, 41-2). The virtues he recommends are seemingly available to all, and everyone who attends to his *Advice to Young Men* will "perform a great deal more than men generally do perform, whatever may be his situation in life." Cobbett suggests, on the other hand, that no amount of abstinence and early rising can make up the natural differences of talent. Hence, not every young man who reads the book will be able to perform "labours of equal magnitude and importance" (5-6).

Chapter Four. The Division of Labour in William Hazlitt's Republic of Letters

In previous chapters, I argued that both Burke and Cobbett have good--that is to say comprehensible--ideological reasons for identifying mental with manual labour. In Burke's political economic writings, the assimilation of mental and manual work underlies his apology for the unfettered operation of the laws of the market. Cobbett, although he sedulously avoids Burke's easy identification of intellectual and physical labour, still resorts to the analogy to suggest his solidarity with rural workers. William Hazlitt--metaphysical thinker, consummate prose stylist, romantic aesthetic theorist--would seem, on the face of it, less likely than either Burke or Cobbett to form rhetorical links with manual labourers. Hazlitt's intellectual and artistic elitism, indeed, are frequently adduced as evidence of his political equivocation. A recent critic, expressing what is something of a scholarly consensus, has argued that Hazlitt found it "increasingly difficult to transcend his own class bias" in order to align himself with the labouring classes (Dart, *Rousseau, Robespierre and English Romanticism* 160, 225). In this account, Hazlitt is presented as an intellectual, who, while he attacked apostate intellectuals like Burke and criticised the utilitarian bent of middle-class reformers such as Bentham, was unable to overcome his bourgeois aversion to "radical combination" in order to join with the labouring classes in the way Cobbett, for example, was able to do (160, 225, 240-1). I will argue that the recurrence, in Hazlitt's writings, of images comparing the writer to the labouring artisan invites us to modify this view of him as a prisoner of the sensibilities belonging to a "middle-class" intellectual. Although the

analogy with manual labour is primarily, for Hazlitt, a way of figuratively describing his position in a socially stratified republic of letters, I will claim that his self-representations consistently project a collectivity of labourers to which the writer, albeit obliquely, belongs.¹

Commentators on Hazlitt's writings are correct to point out that there is a potential for conflict between his romantic notion of artistic and literary genius, on one hand, and his political views, on the other. I will begin by claiming that this conflict can be most clearly articulated as a tension between the opposed values of indolence and labour.

In the Advertisement to the 1798 *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth noted that the poem "Expostulation and Reply" and its companion poem, "The Tables Turned," arose out of a "conversation with a friend who was somewhat unreasonably attached to modern books of moral philosophy" (Gill 492). The friend is usually assumed to have been Hazlitt, who later recalled a "metaphysical argument with Wordsworth" at Alfoxden in the spring of 1798, the time of Wordsworth's composition of both poems (*Complete Works* 17: 119). In "Expostulation and Reply" the poet is reprimanded by his "good friend Matthew"--Hazlitt--for squandering his leisure time: "Where are your books? that light bequeathed / To beings else forlorn and blind! / Up! up! and drink the spirit breathed / By dead men to their kind" (lines 5-8). The poet responds by advocating a "wise passiveness" rather than the continual seeking after knowledge: "there are powers / Which of themselves our minds impress" (21-4). "The Tables Turned" repeats this advice. Wordsworth's strategy in both poems is to turn the

criticism back on the critic, so that it is Matthew who is squandering his time (and his powers) by labouring to extract from books that which can only be imbibed from nature. Together with "Lines, written at a small distance from my house," penned two months earlier and addressed to his sister, these poems express some of the central tenets of Wordsworth's poetic philosophy. As Nicholas Roe observes, Wordsworth's verses are directed, at least in part, against William Godwin's "severely rational arguments for disinterested benevolence, [. . .] asserting natural spontaneity and cheerfulness as the sources of wisdom and truth--not the labouring mind worrying away at 'decisions of the intellect'" (242-4). Reading, Wordsworth proposes, especially reading abstruse philosophy, closes the mind; walking and idling outdoors, absorbing the lessons that nature teaches, is not only a more pleasurable way of spending one's leisure time than reading books, but is also the path to true wisdom: "Books! tis a dull and endless strife, / Come, hear the woodland linnet, / How sweet his music; on my life / There's more of wisdom in it" (9-12). Less obviously, perhaps, reading also disfigures the body; hence, in "The Tables Turned," Wordsworth reminds his bookwormish interlocutor of the benefits of the outdoors and cautions him about the dangers of over-study: "Up! up! my friend, and clear your looks, / Why all this toil and trouble? / Up! up! my friend, and quit your books, / Or surely you'll grow double" (1-4).

Wordsworth's deformed reader is, of course, a figure of speech, one that clinches the valorisation of idleness over labour that organises the poem's figuration of mental activity. Metaphysical thinking is portrayed as a dull and arduous endeavour--nicely

captured by Roe's "labouring mind"--which, in the impression it leaves on the body, is likened to the performance of a repetitive mechanical task.²

Whether or not he took Wordsworth's playfully admonitory lines to be addressed to him, Hazlitt seems to have absorbed the lesson of Wordsworth's extempore philosophising. Although he later cited "The Tables Turned" as evidence of Wordsworth's congenital aversion to analytical thinking, to "taking things in pieces or looking into the reasons for them," Hazlitt's own *Essay on the Principles of Human Action* (1805) takes issue with Godwin's rationalism, his optimism about human reason, by arguing that imaginative sympathy provides alternative grounds for faith in disinterested human action (9: 5-6; Roe 240-2). Hazlitt seems, too, to have heeded the poet's advice about the benefits of idleness. In the essay in which he records the meeting with Wordsworth at Alfoxden, "My First Acquaintance with Poets" (1823), Hazlitt writes: "So have I loitered my life away, reading books, looking at pictures, going to plays, hearing, thinking, writing on what pleased me best" (17: 116). Tom Paulin comments that this passage "expresses his idea that hanging around, indolently loitering, lazily doing nothing, is an essential part of the creative process" (194). Making a slightly different, but related, point to Paulin's, Stanley Jones claims that Hazlitt's frequent invocation of indolence also sounds a longing after peace and solitude, a romantic desire for withdrawal from the world (29-30). "For many years of my life I did nothing but think," Hazlitt recalls in an 1821 essay: "I had nothing else to do but solve some knotty point, or dip in some abstruse author, or look at the sky, or wander by the pebbled sea-side [. . .]. I cared for nothing, I wanted nothing" (8: 91-2).

Thinking, reading, hearing, watching, wandering: Hazlitt's evocation of the life of the mind often conveys indolence, freedom, and a sense of ease.

This version of mental activity is closely associated with Hazlitt's estimation of genius, of a spontaneously creative imagination. In "On Posthumous Fame," Hazlitt writes that the works of highest genius are produced "with too much facility (and, as it were, spontaneously) [. . .]. [They] appear to come naturally from the mind of the author, without consciousness or effort. The work seems like inspiration--to be the gift of some God or of the Muse" (4: 24). Elsewhere, he writes that "[t]he definition of genius is that it acts unconsciously, [. . .] unseen [. . .] with as little ostentation as difficulty. Whatever is done best, is done from the natural bent and disposition of the mind" (12: 118). In his comparison of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, Hazlitt comments that "[t]here was nothing spontaneous, no impulse or ease about [Jonson's] genius: it was all forced, up-hill work, making a toil of a pleasure" (6: 41). He contrasts Shakespeare's "independence of mind and original thinking" to Jonson's "studied passages, forced from the sweat and labour of his brain," Jonson "labours hard, lashes himself up, and produces little pleasure with all his fidelity and tenaciousness of purpose" (6: 39). By contrast, men of genius, like Shakespeare, hardly work at all. There is a close connection, as Uttara Natarajan suggests, between Hazlitt's preference for the inspired over the laboured in poetry and his preference for the passionate over the mechanical. The affirmation of a spontaneous, intuitive intellect is integral to Hazlitt's critique of "Bentham's Utilitarianism and its consequences in the progressive mechanization of men" ("One Undivided Spirit" 256). In Hazlitt's thought, mechanism

is opposed by "a parallel theory of dynamic constructivism [. . .] which stems directly from a concept of imaginative power instinct within poetic creation" (256-57).³

The idea of genius, then, has a critical-ideological as well as an aesthetic inflection for Hazlitt, and, as a corollary, his evocation of idleness is also more than just a recognition of the Wordsworthian nexus between indolence and creativity. In recommending idleness, I believe, Hazlitt is also opposing the doctrine of the utility of work. In the following passage from "On a Sun-Dial" (1827), for example, he makes it clear that he does not necessarily expect to profit from doing nothing: "What I like best is to lie whole mornings on a sunny bank on Salisbury Plain, without any object before me, neither knowing nor caring how time passes, and thus with 'light-winged toys of feathered Idleness' to melt down hours to moments [. . .]. At length I rouse myself from my reverie, and home to dinner, proud of killing time with thought, nay even without thinking" (17: 245). There is no expectation here of some future return; Hazlitt is content to waste his time without trying to recuperate the time squandered through a metaphor of investment, or an economy of loss and gain.

Hazlitt's resistance to the imperative to "labour" is clarified in his 1815 essay "On Manner." Here he praises the "grace" or the "inward harmony of the soul" possessed by people from southern and eastern countries: "The people of the East make it their business to sit and think and do nothing. They indulge in endless reverie; for the incapacity of enjoyment does not impose on them the necessity of action" (4: 45-6). As an example of a people possessing this easy grace, he cites the Gypsy population, and in a long footnote takes the opportunity to attack Wordsworth for

reneging on his earlier philosophy of indolence. In the poem "Gipsies," published in 1807, Wordsworth meditated on a group of travelers whom he encountered both on his way out for a walk in the morning and on his return that evening: "Twelve hours, twelve bounteous hours, are gone while I / Have been a traveller under open sky, / Much witnessing of change and cheer, / Yet as I left I find them here" (lines 10-12). Wordsworth delivers a hyperbolic rebuke to the apparently unmoving Gypsy group: "better wrong and strife / Better vain deeds or evil than such a life!" (21-2). If Wordsworth (perhaps in jest) redeems his loitering by representing it as a kind of purposeful activity, Hazlitt rejects such a self-justification. He responds by turning the poet's advice against him, and extracts from Wordsworth's philosophy what is most critical in it:

We did not expect this turn from Mr. Wordsworth, whom we had considered as the prince of poetic idlers, and patron of the philosophy of indolence, who formerly insisted on our spending our time in a "wise passiveness." Mr. W. will excuse us if we are not converts to his recantation of his original doctrine [. . .]. What had he been doing in these four and twenty hours? Had he been admiring a flower, or writing a sonnet? We hate the doctrine of utility even in a philosopher, and much more in a poet: for the only real utility is that which leads to enjoyment [. . .]. [The Gypsies] are an everlasting source of thought and reflection on the advantages and disadvantages of the progress of civilisation: they are a better answer to the cotton manufactories than Mr. W. has given in the *Excursion*. (4: 45-6)

Hazlitt is an adherent of Wordsworth's "original doctrine" of idleness because he sees in it a resistance to the ethic of industriousness that was an important ideological component of the social formation emerging in Britain in the early-nineteenth century, a social formation which Hazlitt summarizes with the phrase "cotton manufactories." As I detailed in chapter one, throughout the eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries labour became central to notions of individual and collective identity. The cultural valorisation of labour was not simply an economic injunction to work, but, as I suggested, centered too on questions of morality and religion. In Hazlitt's prose, the imperative to labour is opposed both by the errant individuality of the poet and by customary pre-industrial forms of sociality embodied by the Gypsies. The poet's eccentric habit of spending the daytime hours roaming the Lake District, contemplating nature, like the Gypsies' normal practice of disposing of their own time as they deem fit, is a repudiation of the work ethic and the tyranny of "progress."⁴

In this chapter I want to set Hazlitt's memorialisation of his own indolence and his honouring of genius against the constant reference in his writing to the labour and pains, the "toil and trouble" of mental work. For if the image of loitering or of wandering provides Hazlitt with one way of figuring the life of the mind, Wordsworth's image of the writer or reader bent "double" by over-work gives him another way of figuring intellectual activity. In Hazlitt's essays, that is, the disfigured body is not just a way of reinforcing Wordsworth's point about the benefits of idleness, but is also a sign of honourable toil. In his brilliant, self-justificatory essay, "A Farewell to Essay-Writing" (1828), Hazlitt, describing himself as an extreme example of the

"scholastic character," claims that there is an inverse ratio between intellectual integrity and a prepossessing physical presence. His own shy and nervous manner and awkward disposition, he posits, were the natural consequence of the inveteracy and sturdiness of his principles, of his having "brooded over an idea till it has become a kind of substance in my brain" (17: 317). "[T]hat which I have found out with much labour and pains, and to which I can scarcely do justice without the utmost violence of exertion," he writes, is not attested by "my standing upright, speaking loud, entering a room gracefully" (317). The unmanly stoop, the want of "animal spirits, and "the neglect of "the ordinary means of recommending myself," are an index of a firmness of mind acquired through the palpable labour of sustained thinking (317). In view of Hazlitt's celebration of the pleasurable freedom of the life of the mind and in view of his high estimation of spontaneity, however, what are his reasons for depicting himself as a labourer, shaped--both physically and ideologically--by the very discourse he elsewhere flatly rejects?

The first exigency for Hazlitt was that he had to work for a living, and he equates mental and physical labour in order to stress that writing was, for some authors at least, a necessity, a drudgery, a type of arduous labour. However, if Hazlitt's presentation of himself as a labourer arose out of his economic circumstances as an author, like Cobbett he was aware, also, of the ideological possibilities of the assimilation of mental to manual work. Hazlitt's vacillating rhetoric can be explained in part, therefore, by his opposition to two different ideological discourse formations. If Hazlitt commemorates his own indolence in order to oppose the progressive and

modernising ideals of reformers like Bentham, he prizes labour to attack, politically, those whom he labels the "aristocracy of letters," those writers whose reputation depended on extrinsic factors such as wealth, birth and political connection. The analogy of intellectual and physical activity, that is, describes a division of labour within mental activity itself, between those who earn their living from their own resources and those who profit from extrinsic, social and political, advantages, and who, in return, use their cultural status to defend the establishment.⁵ To explore Hazlitt's metaphors of labour, I focus on four *Table Talk* essays written between 1818 and 1822, and make reference to several other essays written between 1820 and 1827. I consider both "The Ignorance of the Learned" (1818) and "The Aristocracy of Letters" (1822) in the context of the contemporary cultural debate over education. Hazlitt criticises the ideological uses of a classical education, and he invokes the analogy with physical labour to demystify learning and to describe the unequal division of labour within the intellectual domain. I discuss, too, how "On the Qualifications Necessary to Success in Life" (1820) and "On the Look of a Gentleman" (1821) employ images of the labouring body and of bodily practices in order to criticise the possession of extrinsic advantages in the supposedly meritocratic republic of letters.

The persistence of the image of the labouring author, I contend, counteracts Hazlitt's claims about transcendental genius. Roland Barthes argues, in the context of a discussion of French literature, that it is around the middle of the nineteenth century that "labour replaces genius as a value," when writing comes to be valued according to "the work it has cost" rather than to the use which it might be put (69). More recently,

Evan Watkins has claimed that underlying the recent changes in terminology in contemporary literary criticism--from talking about the "creation" of an aesthetic artifact to talking about the "production" of ideological discourse--is a "shift [. . .] of analogical perspective": "If since the Romantics it was an organic analogy that best lent itself to description of both a process of creation and the aesthetic subject that results, [now] instead it is the material production of commodities that supplies the analogical force" (77-8). The point is well made, but in Hazlitt's writings, at least, the "Romantic" preference for the inspired over the laboured, for the spontaneous genius over the toiling scribe, is already uncertain.⁶ As I will argue, when Hazlitt illustrates the concept of genius by borrowing the metaphor of "division of labour" from Adam Smith's conceptualisation of eighteenth-century commercial society, he rhetorically collapses the conflicting evaluatory principles--indolence and labour, art and politics--whose opposition are taken to structure his writing.

In the sense that he made his living almost entirely from selling his writing, Hazlitt was a "professional" writer.⁷ From 1812, when he began to work as a parliamentary reporter for the *Morning Chronicle*, to 1817, Hazlitt contributed as many articles to periodicals as he did throughout the rest of his life (over 300), and lived on a small weekly income, the only time during his life, notes Stanley Jones, when he had a dependable salary. He was appointed to the *Chronicle* at four guineas a week and was able to supplement his income, in the intervals between parliamentary sessions, by writing occasional pieces for the paper. In September 1813 he was

appointed as the *Chronicle's* theatre critic. On falling out with the paper's editor, James Perry, Hazlitt became a freelance journalist; he wrote regularly for the *Examiner*, as well as publishing in the *Champion*, and, from 1815, the *Edinburgh Review*. In May 1815 he became the regular dramatic critic for the *Examiner* (Jones 72, 101-3, 146, 185). Hazlitt's reputation as a writer and critic began to rise in 1817, the year he published the *Round Table* volume of essays and of his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays* (262, 280-85). In 1818 he gave up his job writing for *The Times* to work on his three series of lectures, and in this year he published two more books of literary criticism, *A View of the English Stage* and *Lectures on the English Poets*. The success of his *Characters of Shakespeare's Plays*, which went to a second edition in 1818, enabled him to give up writing for the daily papers, and by 1819, the year in which he published *Lectures on the English Comic Writers* and *Political Essays*, he was also able to do without writing for the weeklies (229). Between 1818 and 1823 he wrote about 60 familiar essays for periodicals like the *London Magazine*, essays which were popular enough to be re-issued in book collections: two volumes of *Table Talk* (1821, 1822) and *The Plain Speaker* (1826). The trajectory of Hazlitt's career as a writer, we might summarise, was from wage-labourer to freelance author.

During his lifetime, Jones conjectures, Hazlitt must have earned a good deal without acquiring property and without ever saving enough to get ahead (238). Jones attributes this to the chronic improvidence of the poor person who has never learnt the value of money, and to the principled dislike of self-interest and indifference to material welfare (238-9).⁸ In a version of the "class" explanation of Hazlitt's

behaviour, Jones argues that Hazlitt was an intellectual whose concerns are not the material concerns of the poor; he felt less touched by the physical sufferings of the poor, for instance, than by the thought of their being deprived of constitutional liberty and political rights (236-7). His determination to pursue a career as a freelance writer, for Jones, is of a piece with this hostility to the norms of his society (238-9). Nevertheless, as Jones acknowledges, the one-off payments he received for his lectures and for the copyrights for his books were not such an effective source of income as his regular salary, and he was continually worried by financial difficulties (305-6). If he was freed from the routine grind and the drudgery of wage labour, he was still subject to the necessity of writing to live. If Hazlitt's attitude, as Jones contends, is one of intellectual aloofness to material things, we must still take into account his concern, expressed regularly in his prose, for the more mundane matters of relative poverty and dull, unrewarding labour. Hazlitt returns persistently to his own hazardous occupational position, an anxiety that is conveyed through the importance he attaches to his reputation.

In his account of *Liber Amoris*, Duncan Wu has insisted that the crucial context for understanding Hazlitt's writings in this period is the "running battle waged between [him] and his critics" (202, 205, 209, 212). Hazlitt's acrimonious exchange with the *Quarterly* and with *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* illustrates clearly how alert he was to the need to protect his hard-earned intellectual reputation. Whatever standing Hazlitt secured for himself by his literary criticism might be undermined because of the polemical battle with writers and reviewers of different political colours

(Jones 229). In August 1818, *Blackwood's* printed a vituperative personal attack on Hazlitt, most probably written by John Gibson Lockhart, one of the periodical's joint editors. The article, "Hazlitt Cross-Questioned," was signed "An Old Friend with a New Face," whose identity Hazlitt took to be the same as that of "Z"--the signature attached to the series "On the Cockney School of Poetry" authored by Lockhart. In the article, Hazlitt is represented as a "mere quack [. . .] one of the sort that lounge in third-rate bookshops and write third-rate books" (550). He is described as a "review, essay, and lecture manufacturer," an "impudent charlatan" and an uneducated "scribbler," who deceives his ignorant and unsuspecting employers at *The Edinburgh Monthly* into publishing "all manner of gross blunders, and impudent falsehoods, and outrageous extravagancies" (550-1). The article, as Hazlitt perceived, was intended as an attack on the *Edinburgh Monthly* and the *Edinburgh Review*, periodicals under the proprietorship of Archibald Constable, as well as an attack against himself (9: 7; Jones 298, 301). In July 1818, Hazlitt had embarked on a series of contributions to the *Edinburgh Monthly*, the one monthly periodical already in existence in the Scottish capital when William Blackwood launched his own magazine in April 1817. Hazlitt, already a contributor to the *Edinburgh Review*, was thereby lending his status as a critic to an attempt to revive a periodical controlled by Blackwood's rival.

In September 1818, Hazlitt wrote to Constable: "The various fabrications in that article were objected to me as lessening the value of my literary estate. My writings are before the public: my character I leave to my friends: but I conceive the law is the proper defence of my property" (*Letters* 189). But what exactly is Hazlitt's

property or literary estate, and how is it separate from his writings and from his character? Jones writes that Hazlitt's property is his earning capacity and future writings (300). On what, however, is this earning capacity based? The object of the *Blackwood's* article, Hazlitt believed, was to deprive him of the possibility of making a living from his writing. *Blackwood's* had insinuated that Hazlitt had only stooped to write for the *Edinburgh Monthly*--"a work better fitted for [his] merits and attainments"--because he had been "expelled" from the more prestigious *Edinburgh Review* (550-51). In his unpublished riposte to *Blackwood's*, "A Reply to Z," Hazlitt accuses Lockhart of intending "to make a breach between me and my employers and prevent me getting other employers" (9: 7). The imputation that he had been expelled from the *Edinburgh Review* "was meant as a prediction to fulfill itself," he writes, and "strikes at my reputation as an author and my livelihood in the most direct and deliberate way" (7). Hazlitt's property, then, was his reputation, his stature as an author, which was inseparable from his character and which was what determined his capacity to place his writings.⁹

One important source of his reputation as a writer, as Hazlitt recognised, was his association with the *Edinburgh Review*. Between 1814 and 1824, he contributed intermittently to this publication, which was widely admired for the high quality of its critical writing, and which was known to recompense its contributors generously. "To be an Edinburgh reviewer is, I suspect, the highest rank in modern literary society," he wrote in the August 1818 edition of the *Edinburgh Monthly* (12: 365). In personal

letters to the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*, Francis Jeffrey, Hazlitt acknowledged his indebtedness to Jeffrey's continuing support. In April 1817, he wrote:

I take the liberty of troubling you with a copy of a work I have just finished relating to Shakespear. I thought perhaps if you approved of it you might take a brief notice of it in the *Edinburgh Review*. I should not make this abrupt proposition, but from the necessity of circumstances. My friends may praise what I write, but I do not find that the public read it, and without that, I cannot live. If I could dispose of the copyright of the *Round Table* and of this last work, I could find means to finish my work on *Metaphysics*, instead of writing for three newspapers at a time to the ruin of my health and without any progress in my finances. A single word from you would settle the question, and make what I write a marketable commodity. (*Letters* 171)

Hazlitt again wrote to Jeffrey in August: "I wish you could at your leisure favour me with a line to say [. . .] whether you think it likely you can *insinuate* The Shakespear Characters in the next no. The book does very well, I understand, and your notice would at once lift me from the character of a disappointed author to that of a successful one" (176). Hazlitt's writing is his property, but the value of this property is determined by the possibility of finding a market for his writings, which is dependent on Jeffrey's "puffing" as much as any intrinsic merit of the writing. As a sought-after lecturer and a prestigious *Edinburgh Reviewer*, Hazlitt's stock was rising, and with it the value of his property, but he was always aware of the erratic value of his cultural

capital. If Jeffrey could make his reputation, then the politically motivated *ad hominem* attacks on him in the Tory press could just as easily ruin it.¹⁰

When he talks of his earning ability as his "property," as if reputation were akin to a skill in a particular trade, it is possible that Hazlitt hints at an identification with traditional artisans. "To be an author, to be a painter, is nothing," he once remarked: "it is a trick, it is a trade" (8: 162-3). The demeaning of traditional skills might have strengthened Hazlitt's sense of the resemblance between his own situation and that of the artisan. Until the Statute of Apprentices of 1814, the possession of a skill in trade had been protected, formally at least, by a requirement that practitioners of certain trades serve a qualifying apprenticeship. The statute, part of the laissez-faire assault on customary regulations, refused to recognise the "knowledge and skills acquired by apprenticeship as a form of 'property' eligible for legal protection" (McNally *Against the Market* 37). Hazlitt frequently comments on the modern spread of literacy as a kind of de-skilling: "I can write a book: so can many others who have not even learned to spell" (8: 79); "All now can read and write equally; and, it is therefore presumed, equally well" (17: 210). As we shall see, the sense of an analogy between the writer's situation and that of manual worker recurs in Hazlitt's essays. However, while Hazlitt's "property" suggests something solid and substantial, reputation is instead always something volatile, intangible. "All professions are bad that depend on reputation" he advised, "which is 'as often got without merit as lost without deserving'" (*Letters* 235; 17: 99). It is the lack of commensuration between merit and reputation--and, therefore, between merit and success--that consistently militates against the profession of

authorship for Hazlitt: "reputation runs in a vicious circle," he laments, "and merit limps behind it, mortified and abashed at its own insignificance" (8: 290).

Gregory Dart has helpfully drawn attention to the way Hazlitt, aware of the extent to which "his literary conditions were determined by social and economic circumstances," dramatised his own precarious situation in the creation of a literary persona (*Rousseau, Robespierre, and English Romanticism* 210, 236; "Romantic Cockneyism" 159). Hence, when *Blackwood's* portrayed Hazlitt "as an ill-educated and spiteful Cockney vagabond, they were merely offering a malicious caricature of several traits that he himself had actually cultivated in his writings, [. . .] in his opposition to aristocratic elitism and his scorn of literary prestige" (236).¹¹ While Dart is right to suggest that *Blackwood's* representation of Hazlitt as a hack repeated Hazlitt's self-presentation, it is worth noting that the *Blackwood's* article, "Hazlitt Cross-Questioned," was specifically a riposte to a recently published essay of Hazlitt's, "The Ignorance of the Learned," an article whose very title was deliberately provocative, and was aimed, as Jones suggests, at the pretensions of John Wilson and John Gibson Lockhart, the two Oxonians who shared the editorship of *Blackwood's* (Jones 297-8). "Hazlitt Cross-Questioned," referred to "The Ignorance of the Learned," which had appeared in the *Edinburgh Monthly* in July 1818, as "trash." *Blackwood's* opined that the article had the motive of "congratulat[ing] yourself, and the rest of your Cockney crew, on never having received any education" and ridiculed Hazlitt for his assumed knowledge of Greek and Latin (551). The dispute between Hazlitt and the contributors to *Blackwood's* centred on the question of education,

specifically on the ideological use of classical education, and this is the context in which I will consider "The Ignorance of the Learned" and another essay from the *Table Talk* volumes, "The Aristocracy of Letters."

As Hazlitt himself acknowledged, his essays on classical learning appear to defend inconsistent positions. "On Classical Education" and "On Pedantry" both make the case for classical learning, while "On the Ignorance of the Learned" and "The Aristocracy of Letters" attack the same. "I have been accused of inconsistency," he wrote, "for writing an essay, for instance, on the Advantages of Pedantry, and another, on the Ignorance of the Learned, as if ignorance had not its comforts as well as knowledge" (17: 313). Again, in his *Letter to William Gifford* of February 1819, Hazlitt defended his apparent inconsistency:

I have not been wedded to my particular speculations with the spirit of a partisan. I wrote, for instance, an essay on pedantry to qualify the extreme contempt into which it has fallen, and to show the necessary advantages of an absorption of the whole mind in some favourite study, and I wrote an essay on the Ignorance of the Learned to lessen the undue admiration of learning and to show that it is not everything. (9: 30)

Natarajan believes that Hazlitt's conversational essays can be arranged into thematic groups, so that rather than exploring a subject in detail and from different perspectives in a single essay, Hazlitt, amplifies "an idea or theme, by returning to it in its different aspects" in different essays (*Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense* 185). This certainly accords with Hazlitt's explanation of his inconsistency. In a letter to MacVey Napier,

he made a similar admission: "I confess I am apt to be paradoxical in stating an extreme opinion when I think the prevailing one not quite correct. I believe however this way of writing answers with most readers better than the logical" (*Letters* 158). By paradoxical, Hazlitt means contrariness, the willingness to go against received opinion, rather than self-contradiction or logical absurdity. The point is pertinent, nevertheless, for it is Hazlitt's predilection for paradox that explains his inconsistency. He defended his "love of paradox" as a form of provocation, necessary to counteract deep-seated prejudice, and in his paradoxical style of writing he had found the secret of "convey[ing] subtle and difficult trains of reasoning" in a "popular mode" (9: 30-1). In giving popular expression to difficult ideas, Hazlitt expanded, he occasionally found it necessary to "oversho[o]t the mark" running to "hyperbole and extravagance," and his remedy was to correct this excess in another essay (17: 312-13). With reference to the apparently contradictory positions in "On Classical Education" and "The Ignorance of the Learned," however, I argue that Hazlitt's views do possess a consistent argumentative logic. Roe contends that Z's polemic on the Cockney School "reflected and contributed to the controversy surrounding educational practices during the Romantic period" (10). The coherence of Hazlitt's essays on education appears only in the context of his participation in this ideological quarrel over education, and in his resistance to the political and ideological uses made of classical learning.¹²

Despite *Blackwood's* animadversions on the quality of his education and on his presumed knowledge of the classics, Hazlitt did receive a very good education, at the Unitarian New Academy at Hackney. Indeed, as a number of historians have

concluded, most serious scholarship was, at this time, carried out at the "morally well-conducted dissenting academies," where the classics were taught alongside modern languages and pragmatic subjects; these institutions provided a more well-rounded education than the public schools, preparing students more adequately for careers in commerce and manufacture, as well as for the professions of law and medicine (Bowen 166; Alan Richardson 80). Contrary to the insinuations of *Blackwood's*, Hazlitt was not opposed to learning *per se*. In "On Classical Education" Hazlitt says that a study of the classics "gives men liberal views" and teaches them the power of abstraction:

it accustoms the mind to take an interest in things foreign to itself; to love virtue for its own sake; to prefer fame to life, and glory to riches; and to fix our thoughts on the remote and permanent, instead of narrow and fleeting objects. It teaches us to believe that there is something really great and excellent in the world, surviving all the shocks of accident and fluctuations of opinion, and raises us above that low and servile fear, which bows only to present power and upstart authority. (4: 4)

As Roe points out, radical writers frequently noted the values of classical civilisation in politically contentious ways (63). Like Keats, Hazlitt emphasises the liberal and democratic associations of classical culture, thus challenging the establishment's interpretation of the classics, and it was, in part, the challenge to the establishment's ownership of the classics that was resented by *Blackwood's*. Lockhart's representation of the low social background and the inadequate education of the Cockney School,

therefore, was an attempt to counter the erosion of received cultural values and traditional authority (Roe 14-20, 63, 69).

The attack on classical learning in "The Ignorance of the Learned" must be seen in the context of the education debate. The article begins: "Anyone who has passed through the regular gradation of a classical education, and is not made a fool by it, may consider himself as having had a very narrow escape" (8: 71). Whereas "On Classical Education" commended a knowledge of the classics for raising our views above the "low and servile," in this essay Hazlitt argues that a classical education at one of the public schools merely inculcates servility and docility. The object in both essays is not learning as such, but the purposes to which education is put. The target of criticism in "The Ignorance of Learned" is the use of classical education to reproduce social privilege.

A training in the classics acquired through the public schools and the two universities, as James Bowen argues, traditionally had helped to maintain the ruling class by providing a common cultural knowledge for a tiny proportion of the population (Bowen 162-4, 166). The educated elite, the sons of the ruling class, went on to fill all the important positions of power in parliament, the bureaucracy, the judiciary, and the church (162-3). During the eighteenth century the reputations of both Oxford and Cambridge, as well as that of the public schools, came under scrutiny (161-2, 166). Adam Smith's criticism of the teaching at Oxford in *The Wealth of Nations*, based on his own experience there, is one instance of the increasingly vocal critique of traditional institutions of learning. For Smith, the richest and best endowed

institutions had been the slowest to take on improvements in learning, and were content to be sanctuaries for "exploded systems and obsolete prejudices [. . .] after they had been hunted out of every other corner of the world" (*Wealth of Nations* 2: 761, 772). The Dissenting Academies and the Scottish Universities provided a more useful education, training their students for careers in the professions or preparing them for business, and by the standards of scholarship that they established, they effectively presented an ideological challenge to the educational hegemony of the two universities (Bowen 168). By the early-nineteenth century, then, as Bowen argues, education had become an object of contention between the traditional ruling class and the new urban bourgeoisie of traders, financiers, and manufacturers; canvassing for political reform was accompanied by demands for educational reform that would grant greater access to the power conferred by an exclusive education (161-2, 168).

It is important to emphasise, though, that the dispute over education was not simply one of competition for the accreditation of scarce but increasingly diversified educational resources; the clamour for wider access coexisted with the expression of outright rejection of the system of privilege.¹³ The main point of Hazlitt's criticism in "The Ignorance of the Learned," is to suggest the way that educational privilege legitimates and reproduces social distinction and confers social advantages on the undeserving. In this stance, "The Ignorance of the Learned," is remarkably similar to Cobbett's *Grammar of the English Language*, written at about the same time. Hazlitt argues that what appears as dullness in children is usually a lack of motivation to concentrate on the "dry and unmeaning pursuits of school learning" (8: 72). The boy

who is considered an idler at school because he fails to do well at Greek or Latin, is only unwilling to submit to a dry and meaningless academic discipline, and is likely to be "one who has high health and spirits, who has the free use of his limbs, with all his wits about him, who feels the circulation of his blood and the motion of his heart," one who would rather "feel the open air in his face, look at the fields or the sky, follow a winding path [. . .] than [. . .] sit so many hours pinioned to a writing desk" (8: 72).

Hazlitt makes some scathing comments on the kind of intellect produced by a classical education. Success at school requires only the ability to learn by rote the inflection of a Greek verb, and, therefore, does not exercise either "the highest or the most useful faculties of the mind": "The best capacities are as much above this drudgery, as the dullest are beneath it [. . .]. A mediocrity of talent, with a certain slenderness of moral constitution, is the soil that produces the most brilliant specimens of successful prize-essayists and Greek epigrammatists" (8: 71-2). Here, Hazlitt seems to be expressing what Alan Richardson calls a "new consensus" on education, one which opposed the traditional methods of rote learning of factual knowledge and of early education in classical languages (60). As Richardson points out, the educational rationalists and their Romantic critics often agreed on these issues (59-60). Hazlitt's quarry, though, is less the efficacy of traditional methods of education for their own sake, than the ideological function which the education system fulfills.

In attacking public school education, Hazlitt also has in his sights the two ancient universities: "You will hear more good things on the outside of a stagecoach from London to Oxford, than if you were to pass a twelvemonth with the

Undergraduates or Heads of Colleges of that famous university" (75). Uneducated people, he continues, "have most exuberance of invention and the greatest freedom from prejudice. Shakespear's was evidently an uneducated mind" (77). There is no connection, Hazlitt maintains, between learning and literary genius, between a classical education and genuine intellectual or artistic merit. Shakespeare, the romantic epitome of an intuitive, untutored genius, was, Hazlitt seems to suggest, an idler at school. Hazlitt invokes Shakespeare, who, it is suggested, accomplished great things without the benefit of social or educational privilege, in order to attack the kind of intellect produced by a traditional schooling. As a cultural resource, moreover, Shakespeare was available to be appropriated without a classical education; hence, if quoting Latin or Greek was a sign of membership of a social and cultural elite, to quote Shakespeare and to write in a "familiar style" was, by contrast, to address the people (Bate, *Shakespearean Constitutions* 195).

Like Cobbett, Hazlitt repeatedly makes style into a political question. In "On Familiar Style" (1822), Hazlitt advocates natural, colloquial language--"plain words and popular modes of construction"--and rejects the use of pompous, pedantic, artificial, formal diction (8: 242-4, 247). Artificiality and pomposity were a way of dressing up bad arguments: "Not a glimpse can you get of the merits and defects of the performers; they are hidden in a profusion of barbarous epithets and wilful rhodomontade" (8: 246). In an essay on George Canning ("the cleverest boy at Eton"), for *The Spirit of the Age*, Hazlitt devoted much time to describing Canning's monotonous style of speaking and writing (11: 150). Canning's superficially elegant

oratory relied on the mechanical aids to style, such as "scholastic pedantry," political jargon, and technical flourishes learnt by rote (151-3). The espousal of a "plain style" is a trickier task for Hazlitt than for Cobbett, however. For he admits that his own style is "paradoxical" and "embroidered," a style he had to adopt, he claims, in order to appeal to a wide public; having discovered the secret of popularity, he decided to employ all the "ornaments and allusions," "tropes and figures" at his disposal (17: 312). In his *Letter to William Gifford*, Hazlitt again claims that he resorted to "figurative language and gaudy phraseology" in order to counteract his "first dry manner" (9: 30-1). Hazlitt implicitly distinguishes his own figurative language from Canning's empty verbosity, however: while Canning's style conceals the want of ideas or thought, his own writing makes palatable, for popular consumption, what is of its nature difficult, abstruse or abstract.¹⁴

Throughout "The Ignorance of the learned," Hazlitt's intellectual critique shades into a political one. A classical education, Hazlitt suggests, only prepares the student for the most menial and servile of intellectual occupations in later life: "The learned are mere literary drudges. If you set them upon any original composition, their heads turn, they know not where they are" (8: 71). This is a curious reversal. We might expect that the appellation of "drudgery" and "drudge" with its connotations of servile, menial and labourious work, to have been applied by the contributors to *Blackwood's*, for instance, to the work of mere "scribblers" or "hacks," like Hazlitt, who had to write to earn a living. Hazlitt uses the term drudge not to describe conditions of employment, but to suggest the political servility of the *Blackwood's*

writers: "The faculties of the mind, when not exerted, or when cramped by custom and authority, become listless, torpid, and unfit for the purposes of thought and action.

Can we wonder at the languor and lassitude which is thus produced by a life of learned sloth and ignorance" (8: 71). The classically educated have no independence of mind and no originality of ideas, not only because they are trained by rote learning, but because they are in collusion with power: "there is no dogma, however fierce or foolish, to which these persons have not set their seals, and tried to impose on the understandings of their followers as the will of Heaven, clothed with all the terrors and sanctions of religion" (76). Hazlitt attacks classical education because the educational system serves to reproduce social distinctions, and because the learned provide a mystifying veneer to sanction the power of the ruling class.

To demystify the awe which a classical education commands, Hazlitt sets up a contrast between learning and the practical knowledge possessed by common people; learning is simply one human practice amongst many others. The mere scholar, the learned pendant:

knows no liberal or mechanic art; no trade or occupation; no game of skill or chance. Learning "has no skill in surgery," in agriculture, in building, in working in wood or in iron; it cannot make any instrument of labour, or use it when made; it cannot handle the plough or the spade, or the chisel or the hammer [. . .]. The learned professor of all arts and sciences cannot reduce any one of them to practice, though he may contribute an account of them to an Encyclopaedia. He has not the use of his hands or of his feet; he can neither

run, nor walk, nor swim; and he considers all those who actually understand and can exercise any of these arts of body and mind, as vulgar and mechanical men;--though to know almost any one of them in perfection requires long time and practice, with powers originally fitted, and a turn of mind particularly devoted to them. It does not require more than this to enable the learned candidate to arrive, by painful study, at a Doctor's degree and a fellowship, and to eat, drink, and sleep the rest of his life!

The thing is plain. All that men really understand, is confined to a very small compass; to their daily affairs and experience; to what they have an opportunity to know, and motives to study or practice. The rest is affectation and imposture. The common people have the use of their limbs; for they live by their labour or skill. (8: 74-5)

In a move which he makes repeatedly, as we shall see, Hazlitt appropriates the terms of the division of labour for his attack on privilege and the idleness of the learned: "All that men really understand, is confined to a very small compass; to their daily affairs and experience." Cobbett's influence on Hazlitt is quite clear in this essay. Another influence, one that might lie behind the passage just quoted, is the model of community which informs the description of commercial society in the first five chapters of Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*. The division of social labour is a result, according to Smith, of the propensity in human nature to "truck, barter, and exchange"(1: 25). It is the natural sociality of human beings that enables them to make use of their "different geniuses and talents;" each individual is able to specialise in the production of the one

commodity to which his talents are adapted because "every man may purchase whatever part of the produce of another man's talents he has occasion for" (1: 29-30). Thus, Smith blithely concludes, every individual "lives by exchanging, or becomes in some measure a merchant, and the society itself grows to be what is properly a commercial society" (37). As David McNally explains, Smith's account of the benefits of the division of labour according to particular individual ability assumes a one-class society of autonomous petty-commodity producers, from which social organisation Smith expected two benefits to accrue: first, the increase in national wealth and its general dispersion, and, second, the unfolding of individual capacities through the specialisation of work (*Against the Market* 52-3). Hazlitt never mentions the economic benefits, but over and over again he tacitly advocates a society in which individuals develop their innate abilities in the pursuit of one endeavour. Hazlitt's paradigmatic manual labourer, I will argue, is Smith's independent artisan embedded within a community of other producers, by a relationship of dependence predicated on exchange. I will return to Hazlitt's use of the vocabulary of the division of labour, for the reference to Smith also underpins Hazlitt's explanation of his concept of genius.¹⁵

In the passage from "The Ignorance of the Learned," quoted above, acquiring knowledge is likened to any other practical skill, and perfecting such aptitude involves no less "painful study" than that which justifies the learned scholar leading a life of ease and indolence. From the point of view of the labouring subject, idleness is less an heroic resistance to the work ethic than the effect of unearned privilege. The rhetoric of Hazlitt's passage strives to undo not only the scale of social superiority based on

classical education, but also the unjustified elevation of mental over manual labour. In another essay, "The Indian Jugglers," Hazlitt memorably worries over the question as to why intellectual operations could not be brought to the same level of perfection as physical exercises, and concludes, paradoxically, that the superiority of intellectual attainments--art and literature--lies in the fact that they are not susceptible to the same improvement by repetitive, mechanical exercise (8: 80-3). In this passage from "The Ignorance of the Learned," however, he intimates that some intellectual attainments--such as the kind needed to succeed at a public school or graduate from one of the two universities--can be practiced with the same unvarying mechanical attention. Consequently, Hazlitt sees no reason why rote learning should be valued more highly than learning to juggle or learning to plough. Missing from this passage from "The Ignorance of the Learned," however, is a sense of Hazlitt's own location in the litany of activities and occupations. Clearly, if he does not affiliate himself with the learned, neither is he exactly in the position of the ploughman, the farmer, and the builder, in being devoid of any educational capital. In attacking classical education, Hazlitt attacks the ideological domination of the people by the learned, but he also implies that there are different kinds of intellectual positions, prepared for, as it were, by different kinds of education. I turn, now, to the essay on "The Aristocracy of Letters," where Hazlitt compares his own work to that of the manual labourer in order to insinuate himself into the community of physical activities invoked in "The Ignorance of the Learned."

Crucial to the rhetoric of "The Aristocracy of Letters" is Hazlitt's sense that pure literary merit counts for very little in the putative republic of letters; what really matters is reputation, no matter how it is acquired. Hazlitt claims that just as there is a social hierarchy, so there is a privileged order in the republic of letters. This ascendancy, he writes, is not based on merit or worth, but on some "unmeaning, unanalysed reputation" (205, 207). On inquiring further into the substance of this reputation, we find that "they had a great reputation at Cambridge, that they were senior wranglers or successful prize-essayists" (8: 205). The "preposterous and unfounded claims of mere scholars to precedence in the commonwealth of letters [. . .] are partly owing to traditional prejudice: there was a time when learning was the only distinction from ignorance, and when there was no such thing as popular English literature" (208). Now that classical learning is not the only distinction from ignorance, there have to be other, more obvious and outward signs of merit and worth; the diffusion of learning means that knowledge must be marked in some way intelligible to all. Intellectual capacity or attainment must be certified before it can be capitalised: "the real ore of talent or learning must be stamped before it will pass current" (210). Among the "spurious credentials" upon which intellectual reputations are founded, Hazlitt mentions the advantages of a knowledge of Greek or Latin and the "extrinsic advantages of birth, breeding, or fortune" (207, 210). In addition, political patronage or membership of a literary coterie, such as that around the *Quarterly Review*, are ways of attaining reputation (211-12). Mere literary achievements alone were not enough to guarantee success. Hence, Hazlitt writes

elsewhere of the "misery of pretensions beyond your situation, and which are not backed by any external symbols of wealth or rank, intelligible to all mankind" (8: 284).

The self-elected aristocracy of letters do not have to scratch out a living from their writing alone, and are not required to dash off their work to a deadline. Their writings are not "the ephemeral offspring of haste and necessity," and they can condemn the solecisms of less privileged writers at their leisure (206). For there is another class of writers on the contemporary literary scene who do not possess any of the extrinsic sources of reputation: "the Grub street authors, who write for bread, and are paid by the sheet" (205). From their exalted station, the aristocracy of letters look down "on those who are toiling on in this lower sphere, and earning their bread by the sweat of their brain" (207). We can recall that Hazlitt used the same figure of speech in his essay "On Shakespeare and Ben Jonson," when he contrasts the facility of Shakespeare's poetic imagination to Jonson's "studied passages, forced from the sweat and labour of his brain" (6: 39). The aristocracy of letters does not here carry the positive connotation of transcendental mental activity, however; Hazlitt is not, here, arguing for the superiority of works of inspired genius over the compositions of labouring hacks. The aristocracy of letters refers to those who possess extrinsic advantages, and who do not have to make their living by the sheer labour of turning out sheets of copy. Writers who depend on their own labour have more integrity than those whose learning has been validated by some extrinsic advantage, such as a classical education, the support of a wealthy patron, a noble birth, or membership of a literary coterie. Whereas a literary reputation is evidence of compromise with power,

the sweat of the brow is an indication that one has preserved one's independence and one's commitment to political principle. The bifurcation of the cultural field into an aristocracy and a labouring population is analogous to the division of the social sphere, and we might venture that Hazlitt's representation of intellectual labour is slanted to suggest the intellectual's choice of political allegiances. There is a strong implication, that is, that if the learned are complicit, through situation and patronage, with the powerful, then mere authors, writing for bread and paid by the sheet, are aligned by their labour with the disenfranchised and oppressed majority.

Hazlitt is implying a causal as well as an analogical relationship between power and culture, of course. While Burke lamented in the *Reflections on the Revolution in France* that learning had cut itself free from authority, in Hazlitt's view not all learning had done so. Burke's fear of the revolutionary tendencies of ambitious men of letters was ill-founded because serving the powerful was a more certain method of improving one's position in society than revolutionary activity. In a reference to Burke's *Letter to a Noble Lord*, Hazlitt comments: "We have never yet seen that greatest calamity that can befall mankind, deprecated by Mr. Burke, namely, literary men acting in *corps*, and making common cause for the benefit of mankind, as another description of persons act in concert and make common cause against them (7: 256-7). Like Burke, Hazlitt believed that literature, the printed word, and the force of public opinion, were the combined agents of political liberty, the levers by which tyranny would be deposed. Many of his post-war writings try to explain why the wished-for outcome had not materialised, by showing how literature had been "turned [. . .] against itself" (Cook

140). The treason of intellectuals, for Hazlitt, was their betrayal of the cause of the people, not their repudiation of their other-worldly function.¹⁶

As a consequence of the lure of power, Hazlitt perceived, the literary field was divided against itself. In the *Letter to William Gifford* (1819), his invective against the editor of the *Quarterly Review*, Hazlitt argues that the easiest way for a self-educated man of humble origin and limited abilities to acquire a literary reputation was by becoming a tool of wealth and power. Hence, too, in his sketch of Gifford in the *Spirit of the Age* (1825), Hazlitt says that lacking the advantage of a classical education, he possessed nevertheless that sort of reputation which comes from political service to the great and powerful. Gifford makes his own reputation by "bowing to established authority and ministerial influence," ingratiating himself with those in power by attacking the reputation of every writer "not a hireling and a slave" (11: 115, 117, 124). Under Gifford's editorial leadership, the *Quarterly Review* intended to "pervert literature, from being the natural ally of freedom and humanity, into an engine of priestcraft and despotism" (124). The term "reputation" occurs almost like a mantra in Hazlitt's *Spirit of the Age*. In his essay on Walter Scott, Hazlitt claims that Scott, like Gifford, secured his own status, by his willingness to strike at "the reputation of every one who was not the ready tool of power" (11: 68). A number of articles in the collection of *Political Essays* (1819) focus on this division in the ranks of intellectual and literary men. The political apostasy of intellectuals is explained in terms of their desire for "place or pension" (7: 251). The essay "On the Clerical Character" takes the established clergy as the type upon which the state recruits literary men to serve the

cause of power; the clergy are an emblem of the temptation to collusion with power of any profession which is dependent on the state for temporal advancement (7: 250-1, 255, 257-8). As in "The Ignorance of the Learned," where he claims that there is "no dogma [. . .] to which [the learned] have not set their seals" (8: 76), Hazlitt suggests that there is a symbiosis between political and social power, on one hand, and literary prestige on the other.

Some of Hazlitt's most vituperative polemic is reserved for Thomas Malthus, and his *Reply to the Essay on Population* gives a good idea of why Hazlitt thought it politically efficacious to attack the reputations of reactionary intellectuals of a different political persuasion. Like Cobbett, Hazlitt understood that the refutation of Malthus' ideas would have material consequences, and he devotes much time to attacking the invidious and ill-founded assumptions behind the population principle. Hazlitt demolishes Malthus' arguments--"crude and contradictory reasoning [. . .] a miserable reptile performance"--and argues that his adversary's intellectual status depended wholly on his having ingratiated himself, through his doctrines, with the rich and powerful. Malthus' *Essay on the Principle of Population* was essentially a convenient justification for the most selfish instincts of his readers. Malthus' *Essay* was fatal to the poor, Hazlitt claimed, because its reputation for scientific objectivity gave currency to its pernicious and specious doctrine, which amounted to starving the poor to keep the rich in luxury (*Reply to the Essay on Population* 4-5, 19-20). Hazlitt's acknowledgment of the influence of Adam Smith need not be at odds with his critique of Malthus, in particular, and political economy, in general, as I made clear in chapter

one. Smith's thought was frequently appropriated by radicals in the early nineteenth century, for they sensed that Smith was predisposed to favour labour over capital.

In his writings on Malthus and in his other articles on political economy, Hazlitt makes clear that he is on the side of the poor against the rich; his self-representation as a writer living by the "sweat of his brain" signals this fundamental social and political allegiance. At bottom, the choice of affiliation was a straightforward one, even though Malthus tried to remove the possibility of choice or agency in human actions. Hazlitt trenchantly opposed what he considered to be the pseudo-science of political economy, from the early reply to Malthus to a series of articles for the *Examiner* in 1828 (7: 332-61; 11: 103-14; 19: 278-302). Political economy claimed for itself the status of a science in order to lend the appearance of necessity to what are ideological claims. "The condition of the poor [. . .] will not be ameliorated by making a science out of the caprice, insolence, luxury, prejudices, and insensibility of the rich" (19: 284). Hazlitt was not completely sanguine even about some of Smith's assumptions concerning the benefits of an unfettered commercial society. In an 1828 article on political economy, Hazlitt writes that the ideological claim that the market laws of supply and demand are fair and impartial is undermined by the existence of unequal exchange relationships. In the labour market, workers are compelled to accept a lower price for their labour than its true value because employers can take advantage of the worker's destitution to force him to accept their (unjust) conditions (19: 298). In itself, we should acknowledge, Hazlitt's attack on the unmerited reputation of establishment intellectuals is no less important than

campaigning on more pragmatic issues. As Jeffrey Cox points out, cultural critique is politically efficacious when political power is reinforced by cultural activity; like other members of the Hunt circle, Hazlitt was interested in attacking the "intellectual, emotional, and ideological grounds" which keep power in place (Cox 59-61).

I want now to show how Hazlitt's perpetual concern with the disproportion between merit and reputation--and, therefore, merit and success--is repeatedly relayed through images of the disfigured body, implying the physical depredations of working as a journeyman or hack writer. In the letter to Francis Jeffrey, cited earlier, Hazlitt links the state of his finances to his health--"writing for three newspapers at a time, to the ruin of my health and without any progress in my finances"--and it is this physical manifestation of his straitened circumstances that I wish to trace in Hazlitt's writings. Again, though, Hazlitt's self-representation is meant to convey his political affiliation as well as his own "proletarianisation." With particular reference to two further *Table Talk* essays, I argue that the image of the writer's diminished body articulates a criticism of aristocratic deportment on behalf of a "labouring" population. If the class of intellectual labourers, whom Hazlitt describes as existing by "the sweat of their brain," are not stamped by any authority and carry no external sign of reputation, they are marked, nevertheless, by the impression of their occupation on the body. Authors who have to earn their bread are marked by their carriage as belonging to the same class of vulgar and mechanical men who habitually labour with their bodies. These essays illustrate Hazlitt's progressive disillusion with a radicalism sustained by an

intellectual elite merely, and his tentative movement to embed himself within a larger population.

In the essay "On the Qualifications Necessary to Success," which appeared in the *London Magazine* in June 1820 as "Table Talk No. 1," Hazlitt again makes use of bodily attainments to attack intellectual pretension. The essay begins with a proverbial wisdom which the rest of the essay, and many of his other essays, elaborates: "Fortune does not always smile on merit:--'the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong'" (12: 195). It is with the lack of recognition accorded to intellectual merit that Hazlitt is most concerned. He argues that the recognition of a man's intellectual attainments depends to some degree on his physical presence and "constitutional talent":

I mean, in general, the warmth and vigour given to a man's ideas and pursuits by his bodily *stamina*, by mere physical organisation. A weak mind in a sound body is better, or at least more profitable, than a sound mind in a weak and crazy conformation [. . .]. Let a man have a quick circulation, a good digestion, the bulk, and thews, and sinews of a man, and the alacrity, the unthinking confidence inspired by these; and [. . .] he shall strut and swagger and vapour and jostle his way through life, and have the upper-hand of those who are his betters in every thing but health and strength. (201)

Paulin argues that this passage "exults, slightly too emphatically, in the manly physical constitution it seems literally to embody, and it's just one among many examples of the rude good health [Hazlitt] wants his prose to possess" (97). This interpretation seems

not quite right, however. Hazlitt recognises that physical accomplishments can be used to make up deficiencies of the intellect, but it is difficult to make good physical shortcomings by mental superiority: "The one shall never feel the want of intellectual resources, because he can *back* his opinions with his person; the other shall lose the advantages of mental superiority [. . .] shall never get rid of the awkward, uneasy sense of personal weakness and insignificance, contracted by early and long-continued habit" (202). In order to get along in the world, outward appearance ("an active body and a stout pair of shoulders") is of more importance than a powerful intelligence (202). The important point here is that while Hazlitt may be lamenting the fact that he doesn't have the physical presence to back up his intellectual arguments, the "unthinking confidence" coupled with the "strut and the swagger" suggest a spurious assumption of superiority.

Hazlitt seems to have in mind Wordsworth's warning about the dangers of too much reading, when in "On the Qualifications Necessary for Success," he cites the example of Pope, a professional writer who, it was said, continually laboured at correcting and revising his poems. Pope, says Hazlitt, "bent himself double and ruined his constitution by over-study when young" (12: 206). Again, in a letter written to his son in March 1822, Hazlitt advises that the habit of a "graceful carriage," acquired at an early age, is advantageous for getting along in society. "Whatever may be the value of learning," he advises, "health and good spirits are of more" (*Letters* 222). As if to illustrate the consequences of failing to heed Wordsworth's advice, Hazlitt cautions against:

por[ing] over your books till you are bent almost double--a habit you will never be able to get the better of, and which you will find of serious ill consequence. *A stoop in the shoulders* sinks a man in public and in private estimation [. . .]. Do nothing to take away the use of your limbs, or the spring and elasticity of your muscles. As to all worldly advantages, it is to the full of as much importance that your deportment should be erect and manly as your actions. (222)

It is not only that intellectual capacity is relatively unimportant as a criterion for worldly success, but an over-exertion of the mind, like the drudgery of manual work, is positively deleterious to one's prospects because of its effects on the body. In "On the Qualifications Necessary to Success in Life," Hazlitt makes this point through the analogy of mental and manual labour:

consciousness of internal power leads rather to a disregard of, than a studied attention to external appearance. The wear and tear of the mind does not improve the sleekness of the skin, or the elasticity of the muscles. The burthen of thought weighs down the body like a porter's burthen. A man cannot stand so upright or move so briskly under it as if he had nothing to carry in his head or on his shoulders. (12: 206)

The scholar's stooped and unmanly physical appearance is not likely to impress the non-intellectual majority; not the least of a scholar's miseries, Hazlitt complains, is that "the common herd do not by any means give him full credit for his gratuitous sympathy with their concerns; but are struck with his lack-lustre eye and the wasted

appearance" (206). Hazlitt apparently expresses dismay, here, with the ignorant and indiscriminating majority who make superficial judgments based on "personal appearance, not by proofs of intellectual power" (206). At the same time as he voices his disappointment with the insensibility of the majority to intellectual excellence, however, Hazlitt identifies with the cause of the common herd ("a gratuitous sympathy with their concerns"). The burden of thought, which his empathy with the unappreciative populace seems to entail, aligns him still more closely to them by suggesting an analogy between their labours and his own. If the common herd cannot recognise merit, this is partly because they are led by the arbiters of taste ("the few who are judges of what is called real and solid merit") who are themselves motivated by intellectual envy and the desire for personal distinction (207).

In "The Shyness of Scholars," the same differences of physical appearance are used to distinguish between the genuine scholar and the learned pedant. A scholar is defined as someone who toils patiently over many years to master any art or science where a successful or satisfactory end result is doubtful; long study only teaches the uncertainty of wisdom and humbles the student (17: 255-6). Hazlitt bewails the bodily effects of mental labour when he writes of the years of "patient toil" which take their toll on the "shattered sickly frame and trembling nerves" of the studious man: "The labours of the mind, like the drudgery of the body, depress and take away the usual alacrity of the spirits" (17: 256, 259). Both the labour of study and the sense of humility that ensues have their effect on the body; a student "naturally loses the smartness and ease which distinguish the gay and thoughtless rattler," and finds that

the world prefers health and animal spirits to the shattered and sickly frame of the scholar (255). To succeed in life a man should "carry about with him the outward and incontrovertible signs of success, and of his satisfaction with himself and his prospects" (257). The merit of the genuine scholar manifests itself in his modesty, while the "pedant swells into self importance and renders himself conspicuous by pompous arrogance and absurdity" (259). Those mental workers who labour to achieve a thorough knowledge of their subject are virtually disqualified from worldly success because the world values the appearance of "smartness and ease" which is incommensurate with hard labour. Hence, Hazlitt refers in his "Farewell to Essay-Writing" to his own "want of animal spirits" arising from his excessive "scholastic character" (17: 317).

While Hazlitt professes to envy the sleek skin and elastic muscles of the healthy body for the advantages it confers, these signs of success are hardly held up for the reader to admire; rather, a sound constitution to back up one's intellectual shortcomings is a symbol of having achieved success without deserving it. In contrast, the disfigured body is frequently invoked in Hazlitt's prose to signify integrity, and is a sign of having succeeded by merit alone. If the ostensible concern of "On the Qualifications Necessary to Success" is with the way in which a good appearance can make good intellectual deficiencies in the eyes of the public, however, Hazlitt's emphasis on personal appearance is also a bit misleading. His real grievance in this essay is with the use of extrinsic advantages of any kind to secure an advantage in the republic of letters. In order to succeed, an author "must be something more than an

author," he writes: "the simple literary character is not enough" (12: 208). The reason why *Blackwood's* magazine praises Shelley and criticises Keats, says Hazlitt, is because of their difference in social standing (12: 208). In "The Aristocracy of Letters" (1822), Hazlitt makes the same point about the different critical reception accorded to Byron and Keats: Byron's "reputation culminates from his rank and place in society," while Keats had not the protection of rank or wealth (8: 209-11). "The way to fame, through merit alone," he writes, "is the narrowest, the steepest, the longest, the hardest of all others" (12: 196). Merit means having laboured to earn what one has without relying on what Hazlitt calls extrinsic advantages. In presenting himself as a hack writer or uneducated scribbler, Hazlitt, an author comparatively lacking in cultural resources, emphasises the virtue of sheer labour.¹⁷

It is not obvious, from Hazlitt's essays, why intellectual merit should not be recognised. In a long footnote to "On the Qualifications Necessary to Success in Life," partly suppressed in the published article, he offers one answer to this question. Hazlitt compares authorship to racket-playing in order to make clear the palpable absurdity of basing literary judgments on extrinsic criteria:

I am so sick of this trade of authorship, that I have a much greater ambition to be the best racket-player, than the best prose-writer of the age. The critics look askance at one's best-meant efforts, but the face of a racket-player is the face of a friend. There is no juggling there. If the stroke is a good one, the hit tells. They do not keep two scores to count the game, with Whig and Tory notches. The thing is settled at once, and the applause of the *dedans* follows

the marker's voice, and second the prowess of the hand, and the quickness of the eye. The accomplishments of the body are obvious and clear to all: those of the mind are recondite and doubtful, and therefore grudgingly acknowledged, or held up as the sport of prejudice, spite, and folly. (12: 207, 409)

If Hazlitt's strategy in comparing mental to material activity is to make intellectual work more palpable, to show the injustice of denying a good "hit," then the contrast implies, instead, the impossibility of establishing any unquestionable criterion of merit and success for purely intellectual attainments. Hazlitt seems to acknowledge that intellectual accomplishment simply cannot be identified in the same unambiguous way as bodily prowess. Hazlitt makes the same point in "On the Disadvantages of Intellectual Superiority" (1822), when he comments that intellectual power is not the same as bodily strength; intellectual advantages count for nothing because those one wants to impress cannot judge of one's excellences (8: 281-2).

John Whale claims that, in the essay "The Indian Jugglers," Hazlitt acknowledges that the activity of genius (as against that of juggling) exists in the "relativistic arena of opinion and aesthetics" (Whale, "Indian Jugglers" 213). In the context of "The Qualifications Necessary to Success," however, an essay which purports to criticise the advancement of the undeserving, it is curious that Hazlitt should suggest that there is something inherently unclear ("relativistic") about mental attainments. Reputation ("often got without merit and lost without deserving") is something spurious and superficial, is a precarious, unreliable, and fickle commodity;

by implication merit should be something reliable and substantial. Hazlitt's point seems to be that in the absence of clear and uncontested criteria for determining intellectual merit, decisions about literary and artistic value are either distorted by the indiscriminateness of popular taste, or are corrupted by being blatantly motivated by external (social and political) considerations. Advancement is denied the meritorious individual because literary judgments are either in the hands of judges who have extra-literary criteria in mind ("Whig or Tory notches"), or in the hands of an audience (the onlookers) who merely follow the voice of the marker. While he certainly repeats the quintessential romantic anxiety that the artist or writer's alienation is a consequence of the inability of the general public to make refined artistic judgments, Hazlitt is more obviously concerned that the lack of correspondence between merit and success is a consequence of the reproduction of the unearned privileges of social background, educational credentials, or political patronage in the cultural domain. The market for intellectual good is not merely a lottery, but, worse, a lottery that has been fixed. "There can be no true superiority but that which arises out of the presupposed ground of equality," he insisted in "The Aristocracy of Letters" (8: 208).

The same point, in fact, is made more obliquely in "The Indian Jugglers." As I have already noted, this essay develops the "Romantic" antinomy between the mechanical and the imaginative. The essay begins by suggesting that perfectible, mechanical skill is more impressive than intellectual achievement, but goes on to argue instead for the superiority of the non-mechanical and non-perfectible "involuntary power" (genius) over "voluntary power" (talent) (8: 84). Hazlitt ends the essay, rather

oddly, with "a singular instance of manual dexterity," by reproducing an obituary to the fives player, John Cavanagh, which he had written for *The Examiner* in 1819. In this obituary, Hazlitt again observes the difference between a physical and an intellectual hit: "His blows are not undecided and ineffectual--lumbering like Mr. Wordsworth's epic poetry, nor wavering like Mr. Coleridge's lyric prose, nor short of the mark like Mr. Brougham's speeches, nor wide of it like Mr. Canning's wit, nor foul like the *Quarterly*, not *let* balls like the *Edinburgh Review*" (87). The essay's end is curious because it is not immediately clear how the tribute to Cavanagh mediates the central idea of the essay. I would argue that Hazlitt is again pointing out the difference between the democratic and meritocratic game of fives and the undemocratic "republic" of letters. The game of fives is a model, in the mechanical domain, of what literature could be in the intellectual. If the intellectual sphere was truly meritocratic, Hazlitt points out, none of the writers and speakers and none of the periodicals he mentions would have attained the status they hold. In racket games there is a "presupposed ground of equality." The obituary to Cavanagh makes sure that the comparison between rackets and letters is not lost on the reader: Cavanagh is "an Irishman by birth and a house painter by profession," yet he is universally admired wherever he plays (88). The fact that literary and artistic judgments are relativistic is less the cause of Hazlitt's concern, then, than the absence of a level playing field.

In his essay on the learned, as I have shown, Hazlitt draws on the language of the division of labour to critique social distinctions based on claims of intellectual superiority; learning is no different from any other exclusive endeavour and so cannot

be used to legitimate social hierarchy. The identification of mental and manual labour occurs to similar purpose in the essay "On the Look of a Gentleman." Published in the *London Magazine* in January 1821 as part of the *Table Talk* series and reprinted in a 1826 collection of essays, *The Plain Speaker*, it constitutes something of a companion piece to "On the Qualifications Necessary to Success." The look of a gentleman is defined as the "constant and decent subjection of the body to the mind": a man should have command "not only over his countenance, but over his limbs and motions" (12: 209-10). Hazlitt adds, however, that the look of a gentleman is more admirable "when it rises from the level of common life, and bears the stamp of intellect, than when it is formed out of the mould of adventitious circumstances" (212). For the greatest obstacles to the appearance of a gentleman are the accidents of "education and employment":

A shoe-maker, who is bent in two over his daily tasks; a taylor who sits cross-legged all day; a ploughman, who wears clog-shoes over the furrowed miry soil, and can hardly drag his feet after him; a scholar who has pored all his life over books,--are not likely to possess that natural freedom and ease, or to pay that strict attention to personal appearance, that the look of a gentleman implies. (212-13)

The scholar who has to make his way through hard labour or study rather than by "adventitious circumstances" (birth, breeding, or fortune) is likely to be marked in the same way ("bent in two") as other labourers are marked by the imprint of their occupations on their bodies. Writing and study are, under certain conditions, a

laborious toil which, like a mechanical occupation, takes its toll on the body. A gentleman's demeanour, on the other hand, is a consequence of being "relieved from the necessity of following any of those laborious trades or callings which cramp, strain and distort the human frame. He is not bound to do any one earthly thing; to use any exertion, or put himself in any posture, that is not perfectly easy and graceful, agreeable and becoming" (213). Awkwardness and rusticity of manner arise from the "unremitting application to certain sorts of mechanical labour, unfitting the body for general or indifferent uses" (213). A gentleman is "free from all these causes of this ungraceful demeanour," and his deportment ingratiates him into the good opinion of all with whom he associates (213).

It is clear, again, that the purpose of the essay is not simply to admire the appearance of the gentleman. Hazlitt critiques aristocratic deportment from the perspective of the labouring subject, and attacks, from the perspective of political economy, the philosophy of civic humanism, which sees the disposition of a gentleman as the essential qualification for a comprehensive view of society. Instead of producing enlarged ideas, the unoccupied life which is favourable to the look of a gentleman leads only to the dissipation of energies; in a gentleman's expression "instead of the expansion of general thought or intellect, you trace chiefly the little, trite, cautious, moveable lines of conscious, but concealed self-complacency" (216). The perception of society in terms of the division of labour suggests that, since there can be no general knowledge of society, useful knowledge grows out of laborious occupations.

It can be suggested, too, that here, as in "The Ignorance of the Learned," Hazlitt's model of a community of commodity producers--the shoemaker, the tailor, the ploughman, the scholar--derives from Adam Smith's description of the equitable social division of labour in the first five chapters of *The Wealth of Nations*. In "On the Look of a Gentleman," the exclusion of the aristocratic gentleman of independent circumstances from this putative community of labourers renders the community less than complete; if some members of the community are idle, are exempted from the necessity of labour, then Smith's one-class society of independent producers gives way to a class-divided society. If "The Ignorance of the Learned" reiterates Smith's model of independent producers in order to criticise the privileges accruing from a classical education, then "On the Look of a Gentleman" holds up the same utopian model of society, that of a network of labourer-merchants, to support a critique of the existing exploitative social order. An ideal, equitable distribution of tasks among individuals is opposed to the actuality of an unequal distribution of the quantity of work between social groups: labourers, manual and mental, on one hand, and non-labourers, government placemen, learned authors, on the other. In both "The Ignorance of the Learned" and "The Look of a Gentleman," mental and manual labour are compared to rhetorically construct "the people" as a homogenous class of producers. Like Cobbett, Hazlitt employs productiveness against aristocratic ease. Unproductive labourers are essentially non-workers or idlers, who live off the taxes paid by productive workers, tax which "bows their industry to the ground, and deprives them of the necessary means of subsistence" (7: 223). It is the same rhetoric, again, which informs Hazlitt's

perception of a divided society in "What is the People?" where he depicts the great and powerful living off the labour of the people: "If the Government take a fourth of the produce of the poor man's labour, they will be rich and he will be in want" (7: 262-4).

The genial view of the division of labour, the equal distribution of tasks among specialised and unalienated producers, derived from Smith, is contrasted to the actually existing division of labour: an unequal allocation of the quantity and quality of labour according to social and economic position.

There are problems, of course, with Hazlitt's persistent resort to metaphors which liken mental and manual labour. In his laments about the difficulty of manifesting intellectual merit in the same way as physical accomplishment, for example, Hazlitt implies that manual work was always adequately rewarded. To put this kind of pressure on Hazlitt's metaphors, however, is perhaps to overlook the very self-consciousness of his figurative language. Hazlitt was perfectly aware of the unequal distribution of the quality as well as the quantity of labour. In his essay "On the Want of Money" (1827), he acknowledges that the work of writing is not the same as that incessant hard labour which alleviates absolute necessity. In this essay, he says that the need of money he alludes to is not that which "arises from absolute poverty--for where there is a downright absence of the common necessities of life, this must be remedied by incessant hard labour, and the least we can receive in return is a supply of our daily wants--but that uncertain, precarious, casual mode of existence in which the temptation to spend remains after the means are exhausted" (17: 175-6). Want is both a relative and an absolute state. Uncertainty, inconvenience, and loss of pride are the

painful conditions of the writer's existence, not absolute destitution or "incessant hard labour" (17: 175-6). The scholar, bent double by poring over his books, does not, by virtue of this labour, belong to the same class as a shoemaker or ploughman.

Despite Hazlitt's avowal of a solidarity with other labourers, the primary intention of the analogy in his writing, as I have argued, is to make political differentiations between intellectuals, and he stresses the point that the labour of writing is not identical to the hard, unremitting labour that can only be compelled by physical necessity. A contrasting case to Hazlitt's is that of Anthony Trollope, who later in the nineteenth century made unsparing use of the analogy between writing and other trades in order to suggest that his own prodigious output was a result of his strict observance of regular work pattern: "There are those [. . .] who think that a man who works with his imagination should allow himself to wait till inspiration moves him [. . .]. To me it would not be more absurd if the shoemaker were to wait for inspiration [. . .]. A shoemaker when he has finished one pair of shoes does not sit down and contemplate his work in idle satisfaction [. . .]. The shoemaker who as so indulged himself would be without wages half his time" (120-1, 323). At one level, Hazlitt's frequent references to shoemakers is intended, like Trollope's, to suggest his ability to produce essays on demand, making phrases with the same facility as a shoemaker makes shoes. As I have been arguing, however, Hazlitt's assimilation of mental and manual labour is not primarily a self-glorification--as Trollope's undoubtedly is--but part of a polemic directed against the intellectual supporters of the status quo.¹⁸

It might be objected, quite reasonably, that, by focusing on Hazlitt's self-representations as they appear in relatively few essays, I have not effectively countered his view of himself as part of an intellectual and literary aristocracy. In order to clarify my reasons for focusing in such detail on the images of the writer as labourer that permeate these essays, I want to return now to the antagonism between Hazlitt's valorisation of labour and his celebration of genius.

Any appraisal of Hazlitt's romantic notion of genius, I contend, has to be set against his regard for the labouring writer; his idealisation of the transcendent imagination must be seen against the persistent presence of images of the deformed authorial body. Hazlitt is unwilling to dispense either with the idealist vocabulary of genius or with the more materialist conception of creativity conveyed by the language of labour, for both the theory of intuitive genius (innate ability) and the language of labour (hard-earned merit) oppose the use of extrinsic advantages to gain intellectual reputation. But there is a tension between the two conceptions of intellectual endeavour. As transcendental mental activity and spontaneous self-expression, genius opposes materialist or utilitarian values; it also asserts the mind's freedom from necessity--including the necessity of labour--and implies the individual's lack of connection to a social matrix. By contrast, Hazlitt also prizes the very qualities of laboriousness and connectedness that the concept of genius opposes. From the perspective of the writer-labourer, genius is equivocal because Hazlitt sees that the idea of literary and intellectual practice it entails is indebted to elevated ideas of writing as gentlemanly ease. Clearly we can see this opposition as one which Hazlitt

was unwilling to resolve, as a permanent tension between his individualism and intellectual elitism, on one hand, and his socially responsive and democratic sentiments on the other. This will not do, however, for, as I now want to show, Hazlitt's neatly oppositional rhetoric is complicated when he explains his notion of genius through borrowing Adam Smith's concept of the division of labour in the social sphere. This surprising metaphor demonstrates Hazlitt's deep ambivalence about the aristocratic character of the concept of indolent genius and evinces his commitment to the idea of a collectivity of labourers.¹⁹

Hazlitt utilises the discourse of the division of labour to make the point that a specialisation of tasks is necessary for achieving real excellence in any endeavour. Over and over again, Hazlitt gives expression to this idea. In "On Genius and Common Sense," he argues that genius works by a principle of exclusivity: "it excels in some one pursuit by being blind to all excellences but its own" (8: 42-3). He then draws an analogy between the ornamental and mechanical arts:

The division of labour is an excellent principle in taste as well as in mechanics.

Without this, I find from Adam Smith, we could not have a pin made to the perfection it is. We do not, on any rational scheme of criticism, inquire into the variety of a man's excellences, or the number of his works, or his facility of production. (49)

Hazlitt makes the same point in the essay "On Pedantry," where he defines pedantry thus: "Pedantry in art, in learning, in everything, is the setting an extraordinary value on that which we can do, and that which we can understand best, and which it is our

business to do and understand" (4: 86). Here again, Hazlitt argues that there is a "natural division of labour in the ornamental as well as in the mechanical arts of human life": any one settled pursuit is "quite enough to take up the whole of our thoughts, time and affections, and anything else will, generally speaking, only tend to dissipate and distract the mind" (85-6). Similarly, in the essay "On the Qualifications Necessary to Success," he writes: "In common life the narrowness of our ideas and appetites is more favourable to the accomplishments of our designs, by confining our attention and ambitions to one single object" (12: 197). "To do anything best, there should be an exclusiveness, a concentration, a bigotry, a blindness of attachment to that one object; so that the widest range of knowledge and most diffusive subtlety of intellect will not uniformly produce the most beneficial results" (197). The man of genius, he asserts in "On the Conversation of Lords", does not try "to do what others can do (which in the division of mental labour he holds to be unnecessary) but to do what they all with their joint efforts can do" (17: 172). And, in his essay "The Periodical Press," Hazlitt sums up: "all the greatest things are done by the division of labour--by the intense concentration of a number of minds, each on a single and chosen object" (16: 216). The idea is clear enough: that exclusivity, concentration, even bigotry, are required in order to achieve great things. But why use the term "division of labour" as an illustrative metaphor? I will conclude this chapter by tracing the implications of Hazlitt's conflation of his two inimical evaluatory principles: labour and genius.

The one writer who, to my knowledge, has commented extensively on this peculiar figure of speech is John Barrell. In a seminal piece, Barrell argues that

through his theory of art Hazlitt resolves the conflict between elitism and populism in his meritocratic social theory. For Hazlitt, Barrell observes, while the principle of universal suffrage is applicable to politics, it is not applicable to matters of taste, which can be adjudicated only by "an aristocracy of genius and taste" (*The Political Theory of Painting* 337). Hazlitt always attacks social or political elitism, but his own republic of taste is made of "aristocrats of intellect and sensibility" (324-5). The point of artistic appreciation, Barrell argues, is that it identifies a meritocratic elite composed of both producer and consumers, whose intellect and innate sense of beauty distinguishes them (332, 335). As Barrell summarises:

The function of art in such a civilisation [in a mass civilisation, democratically organised] is to provide a refuge, not for all, but for those few who are individuals, and whose individuality is left out of account in determinations by popular consent; for it is only in the private sphere of art that they can recognise themselves as individuals, and can come to understand how they differ not only from other individuals, but from the undifferentiated herd (337).

Barrell argues that Hazlitt's views on art were formed as a challenge to the discourse of civic humanism, and to the civic theories of art put forward by Joshua Reynolds and James Barry, by which painting had been represented as a public art. Barrell cites the following important passage from Hazlitt's article on the "Fine Arts":

There is a certain pedantry, a given division of labour, an almost exclusive attention to some one object, which is necessary in Art, as in all the works of man. Without this, the unavoidable consequence is a gradual dissipation and

prostitution of intellect, which leaves the mind without energy to devote to any pursuit the pains necessary to excel in it, and suspends every purpose in irritable imbecility. (331)

For Barry the appreciation of art countered the narrowing of outlook which was a result of the social division of labour. By contrast, Barrell contends, the consequence of Hazlitt's account of the particularity of genius would be to increase the tendency toward the privatisation of society:

The power of extensive vision which seems to guarantee, for earlier theorists, the power of perceiving the public interest, has now become an ability which has nothing to do with the public world, whose interests are served by submission, not resistance, to the division of labour. The meritocratic elite group, those capable of extensive vision, are now those whose refinement of taste elevates them above the world of the public and the common. (332)

Hazlitt protects the individuality of the talented few, and, in so doing, establishes, perhaps inadvertently, the grounds of a new elite. The reason Hazlitt insists on the necessity of keeping domains of politics and art separate, Barrell argues, is because he wants to disallow the possibility that an elitism of taste "might replicate, or in any way re-organise, the structure of the political republic" (335). In this explanation, we find the spectre of Hazlitt's "class bias" raised again; for Barrell implies, at least, that a concern for his own interests--Hazlitt is after all defending the standards of taste which constitute his own cultural prestige--and a loyalty to the individualistic values of

middle-class intellectuals get in the way of Hazlitt's more popular and democratic instincts.²⁰

It is important to note that Barrell is looking specifically at Hazlitt's theory of painting and that he is focusing his analysis on one article: Hazlitt's 1816 supplement on the "Fine Arts" to the fourth and fifth editions of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. It would probably not be possible, Barrell concedes, to extract a coherent overall theory from Hazlitt's numerous writings on art (315-16). Because Hazlitt's figure of speech is ubiquitous in his writings and because Barrell's reading has been profoundly influential, some caveats are in order. It should be acknowledged, for instance, that far from repudiating the suggestion that the republic of letters might replicate or reorganise the structure of the political republic, as Barrell claims, Hazlitt was acutely aware, first, of the extent to which social hierarchies and political alliance were, in fact, manifested in the republic of letters, and, second, that cultural processes had an important role in reproducing political power. Writing had by no means been emancipated from social and political concerns. Barrell implies, at least, that Hazlitt envisioned the greatest threat to a meritocratic ethos arising from the spread of a leveling politics, but I would reiterate that what undermined the possibility of an untrammelled meritocratic realm of letters, for Hazlitt, was the reproduction of existing social (class) distinctions in the cultural domain. My main contention, however, is not that Barrell's criticism is incorrect, but that it is partial; by leaving unexplored the central tension between Hazlitt's romantic vocabulary of the imagination and his metaphors of labour, Barrell gives us a somewhat incomplete account. For if Hazlitt's confusing use of the division

of labour analogy implies anything, then it is the collapsing into each other of the domains of politics and art, whose opposition Barrell, along with other critics, takes to be defining in Hazlitt's work.²¹

The use of the term "division of labour" as a way of illustrating and defending the exclusive concentration required to produce great works is singularly inapt. Given that, as I have already detailed, the man of genius is almost by definition not engaged in laborious pursuits, it is, at the very least, a perplexing choice of illustrative metaphor. It doesn't follow from his allusion to the division of labour, however, that Hazlitt is advocating the privatisation of society. As I have already suggested, Hazlitt seems to have in mind Smith's one-class model of market society. As McNally points out, Smith's division of labour presupposes mutual cooperation and natural sociability rather than self-seeking individualism (*Against the Market* 51, 54). Smith was optimistic that an equitable social arrangement would result from the unfettered commercial exchange among choosing individuals, and that community would emerge from the dependence of each producer on the others (54). Hazlitt seems to have shared Smith's optimism about the genial effects of the division of labour. The important point to make, however, is that the idea of divided social labour, which underlies Hazlitt's conceptualisation of genius, also underlies Hazlitt's description of the labouring author in the passage where he invokes Smith's society of independent craftsmen-merchants to attack the look of the gentleman: "A shoemaker, who is bent in two over his daily tasks; a taylor who sits cross-legged all day; a ploughman, who wears clog-shoes over the furrowed miry soil, and can hardly drag his feet after him; a

scholar who has pored all his life over books" (12: 212-13). The intellectual is here one amongst a community of labouring individuals, all bearing the marks of their labour on their bodies, ranged against an idle and unproductive aristocracy. The person of genius is assimilated into just another labourer, though, perhaps, an exceptionally talented one.

I suggested in my discussion of "The Ignorance of the Learned" that Hazlitt's praise of practical skills tends to undo the social valorisation of mental over manual labour; similarly, it is possible to argue that Hazlitt's deployment of the division of labour is directed against the presumption of superiority on the part of intellectuals. In his "On the Periodical Press" Hazlitt argued that the progress of knowledge had been at the cost of individual genius and originality (16: 213, 216, 218). The lineaments of this argument were familiar. For example, in an 1813 review Francis Jeffrey claimed that "the age of original genius, and of comprehensive and independent reasoning, seems to be over" (*Edinburgh Review* 21 [February 1813]: 20). Jeffrey's point is part of a skeptical rebuttal of the argument for human perfectibility. The brunt of his argument is that however necessary the principle of division of labour might be to progress in the mechanical arts, the sub-division of labour "could never be introduced into literature without depriving its higher branches of all force, dignity, or importance" (20). As Philip Connell has remarked, the notion of genius entails the view that the progress of knowledge depends on the cultivation of the talented and original individual, or a small group of such cultured individuals, rather than on enlightening the mass of the population through the diffusion of knowledge (73).

Jeffrey believes that the progress of knowledge will be halted, as it were, because society is becoming less conducive to the emergence of geniuses. Although he agrees with Jeffrey's main point--the age of heroic genius has gone--Hazlitt does not share Jeffrey's pessimism. The loss of individual genius might be compensated for by a diffusion of knowledge: "We have collected a superabundance of raw materials: the grand *desideratum* now is, to fashion and render them portable. Knowledge is no longer confined to the few: the object therefore is to make it accessible and attractive to the many [. . .]. We are optimists in literature, and hold, with certain limitations, that, in this respect, whatever is, is right" (16: 219-20).

Hazlitt's article contains another, more implicit, reversal of Jeffrey's position. In particular, he confronts Jeffrey's distinction between mechanical or manual arts and intellectual ones. Hazlitt's position is that the age is inconducive to genius not because of the increasing sub-division of labour but because there is less division of labour (16: 216). It is clear, I think, that what Jeffrey means, when he borrows Smith's figure of the division of labour, is the breakdown of complex activities into smaller and simpler component parts, while Hazlitt means the specialisation of employments; this ambiguity of meaning was already present in *The Wealth of Nations*. Moreover, I would argue that Hazlitt is making a polemical rather than an analytic point. By claiming that "all the greatest things are done by the division of labour" (216), he suggests that intellectual labour is already subject to division and fragmentation. The man of genius is an illustration of the division of labour principle, not an exception to it. The implication of Hazlitt's analogy is that intellectual pursuits are not a special

case, but that the same laws, applied with profit to the mechanical arts, had already been applied with advantage to the ornamental arts. It is not the accuracy of Hazlitt's analysis that interests me, but the suggestion of his resistance, once more, to the valorisation of intellectual accomplishments over manual ones.²²

For Hazlitt, the specialisation of work is, on the whole, a positive development. He recognises that the exclusivity of the division of labour (and of genius) can lead to a narrowing of one's world view and thereby to a selfish individualism, yet, he argues, the reflection that no one can expect to excel in more than one field of endeavour should discourage the individual pride arising from the contemplation of one's own abilities: "No one is (generally speaking) great in more than one thing--if he extends his pursuits, he dissipates his strength--yet in that one thing how small is the interval between him and the next in merit and reputation to himself" (12: 164). Hazlitt makes the point repeatedly, that specialisation ideally leads not only to the cultivation of particular and individuating talents, but also to humility arising from a sense of the limitations of our own abilities (164). From the distribution of abilities there ought to follow, logically, a mutual respect for the different but equal talents of others. For example, he writes elsewhere that "the minds of men are as various as their faces--that the modes and employments of life are numberless as they are necessary--that there is more than one class of merit (17: 88). Every individual ought to be encouraged to excel in that which he can excel, but there is no necessary hierarchy of attainments. "There is an endless variety of excellences," he writes, "nearly equal in different ways, if we had but the sense and spirit to enter properly into it" (20: 263). Against what is

designated Hazlitt's elitism, then, we should note the catholicity of his taste and his appreciation of popular culture. Paulin, for one, has drawn attention to "Hazlitt's interest in popular culture," and to the way "the life of the London streets helps to shape his writing" (112, 175). And Cook points out that while Coleridge, for instance, was toeing the Burkean line in arguing that culture depends upon an elite, Hazlitt--and in this, we might add, he is akin to Cobbett--"stresses the origins of culture in the activity of a whole society" (143). Hazlitt's analogy between the division of labour in society and the division of labour in the arts can be taken to support Cook's view rather more readily than the position derived from it by Barrell.

By attending to Hazlitt's liberal individualism, his allegiances to an aristocracy of intellect, and to his idealisation of genius, current criticism reinforces the view that Hazlitt's model intellectual is disembedded from the life of the community. To redress the balance, I have argued that Hazlitt mitigates the writer-intellectual's isolating work practice by imagining his connection to a wider community and his political solidarity with other kinds of workers. It is worth recalling that, in E. P. Thompson's judgment, Hazlitt was the "most 'Jacobin' of the middle-class Radicals and the one who, over a period of years, came closest to the same movement as that of the artisans" (746-7). Similarly, Natarajan stresses the collectivist values which coexist with the individualist values in Hazlitt's writings. In his political essays, for example, Hazlitt defends "the equitable distribution of resources, [. . .] the rights of unionisation of labour, and the necessity of welfare provisions" (*Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense* 177-8). The direction in which Hazlitt is tending, albeit tentatively, in the *Table Talk* essays is away from the

heroic notion of an aristocracy of intellect and toward a sense of allegiance to a collective of labourers. This is suggested as much by his rhetoric as his stance on specific issues; the figure of the writer, marked like the shoemaker by his labour, is Hazlitt's representation of his allegiance.

While it is a truism that Hazlitt wrote primarily for a polite audience and did not directly address the working classes in the way that Cobbett for instance did, it is, nevertheless, a mistake to dismiss too quickly the attempts of writers like Hazlitt and "[Leigh] Hunt to ally 'middle-class' intellectuals with plebeian movements" (Cox 51). As Cox argues, the object of the writers and artists in the Hunt circle was to preserve the attachment of "middle-class" reformers to the popular radical movement (58). Again, it is true that Hazlitt cannot transcend his "class bias"--if by that it is meant that he is concerned about his own financial interest, or that he wants to protect the value of his cultural capital--but this does not mean that he cannot envision a more democratic and egalitarian social arrangement. And while it is true that Hazlitt values individuality and individual freedom, he also projects his idea of an individual writer into a community of other individuals through invoking Smith's account of the division of labour. We might, of course, conclude that his version of community is deeply attenuated for being indebted to Smith's notion of a co-operation among independent craftsmen, or we might decide that his writings offer only a "token form of resistance" (Dart 238) to the separation of the classes. It should to be recognised, nevertheless, that Hazlitt's vision, insofar as it is communicated through his recurrent image of the

division of labour, is not of a simple individualism, nor of a straightforward collectivism, but of an individual embedded within a community.

Hazlitt's insistence that the writer-intellectual is located within the social division of labour, finally, is directed not just against the aristocratic contributors to the Tory periodicals, or against the elitist view of culture perpetrated by Burke and Coleridge; Hazlitt also positions himself against radical liberal intellectuals of his own stripe, including the liberal aristocrats Shelley and Byron. His appraisal of the contribution of each of these exiled aristocrats is ambivalent. In his 1824 *Edinburgh Review* article "Shelley's Posthumous Poems," Hazlitt argues that Shelley's poems are too intellectual, too removed from the material world, and create a world which is "all air" (16: 265). Hazlitt does not say so, but there seems to be a connection between Shelley's poetic insubstantiality and his distance, both social and geographic, from his readers; his fault was that he had "no deference for the opinions of others, too little sympathy with their feelings" (267). It is not through self-sufficing intellectual activity, but through connecting with the real emotions of real people, Hazlitt says, that reform will come about (268-9). In another essay, Hazlitt's criticism of Shelley's "levity" echoes even more obviously Burke's attack on speculative theorists (8: 149). Nothing acts as a "ballast to the poet's mind:" Shelley is held back by "no dull system of realities, no earth-bound feelings, no rooted prejudices [. . .] but is drawn up by irresistible levity to the regions of mere speculation and fancy" (8: 149-50). The same faults form the basis of Hazlitt's sketch of Byron in *The Spirit of the Age*. Byron is a "creature of his own will. He holds no communion with his kind" (11: 69). Although

Byron is liberal in politics, Hazlitt suggests that his "haughty and aristocratic" poetic practice make him an uncertain political ally. His satire, for instance, "is the satire of a lord, who is accustomed to have all his whims or dislikes taken for gospel [. . .]. The satire of a person of birth and quality, who measures all merit by external rank" (74). Byron's liberalism is "preposterous" because, while he "may affect the principle of equality," he can also "resume his privilege of peerage" (77). Unlike Byron and Shelley, who have the benefit of an outsider's view, Hazlitt does not believe that the intellectual can be a detached observer of his own culture. The intellectual's insider identity is suggested by the writer's place within the division of labour. The view perpetrated by the aristocratic poets, Shelley and Byron, represents a challenge to Hazlitt's sense of the intellectual's proper role, and his criticism of the detached view underlines his own sense of the intellectual's mission. Social and geographic distance, the view from outside, or from above, is the stance that Hazlitt wants to rebut.²³

In the first chapter I discussed at length Edward Said's openly romantic delineation of the oppositional intellectual. Said's notion of the unco-opted intellectual is of some exceptionally talented individual who is either actually or metaphorically in exile, without the comforts of accommodation that come from acquiescence to the status quo (52, 59). The metaphors of exile and marginality appear, on first sight, to put Said's adversarial intellectual in the tradition of Grudzinska Gross' displaced aristocrats of the French Revolution. Said makes clear, however, that his exiled intellectual belongs to the community. The dilemma facing the intellectual is one of loyalty; he or she is "beset and remorselessly challenged by the problem of loyalty, [. .

.] no one, no matter the volume of protestation, is above the organic ties that bind the individual to family, community, and of course nationality" (40). Said emphasises that an intellectual's representations ideally "are always tied and ought to remain an organic part of an ongoing experience in society;" that his or her convictions and judgments are arrived at "by a sense of association with others, other intellectuals, a grassroots movement, a continuing history, a set of lived lives" (113, 120). Throughout his writings, Hazlitt represents, both in idea and practice, the intellectual identity Said defines: the emphasis on intellectual independence and political opposition, the commitment to individualistic modes of intellectual practice, a dogged determination to reassert the value of the cultural resources that constitute his intellectual capital, and a propensity to forge rhetorical connections with the unsympathetic masses. The intellectual ideals Hazlitt represents, I think, are ones we still inhabit, so that all criticism of Hazlitt's "class" inhibitions are, at some level, an examination of the values and vocabularies by which we define our place in society. Up to a point, Hazlitt might have agreed with what Said sees as the pleasures of exile and marginality, the romance and challenge of opposition, of fighting for the underdog (xvii); but only up to a point. Said can stress the romance, I think, only because he ultimately has massive institutional backing. In making a living solely from his writing and without the safety of institutional affiliation--apart from the loose circle, identified by Cox, gathered around Hunt--Hazlitt was often too close to poverty, to disenfranchisement, to be able to idealise the condition of marginality.

Even as he continued to employ the analogy for political-ideological effect, Hazlitt, like Cobbett, was well aware of the problematic nature of the assimilation of mental to manual work. For Carlyle, I argue in the next chapter, the inherent danger of metaphors linking the intellectual and the physical becomes almost a topos in itself. Carlyle's provocative representation of the work of "guidance" led his contemporary, John Stuart Mill, to deny emphatically that writing was analogous to physical toil. Given Carlyle's antagonistic strategy of making his point, it is possible that this was exactly his intention.

Notes

¹ I cite Dart because his is a well-argued and nuanced reiteration of the dominant view of Hazlitt as a detached intellectual and liberal individualist. Dart claims that Rousseau's "transgressive egotism" provides Hazlitt with a resource from which he could fashion an oppositional political stance that avoided Toryism, populism, and a reformism that had been appropriated by the philosophic radicals (160-2, 209, 212-13, 222). The Benthamites' appropriation of the discourse of middle-class reformism had left Hazlitt (and other middle-class intellectuals) stymied; unable to acquiesce to the objectification of the poor by the utilitarians, he was, on account of his own class bias, "unwilling to make common cause with Bentham's lowly creatures of necessity" (160, 212, 240-41). Hazlitt is "a fundamentally middle-class writer addressing himself to a middle-class audience [. . . in a] bourgeois style," argues Dart (237). Interestingly, he concedes that Hazlitt's essays offer a "token form of resistance to the Malthusian separation of mind from matter which was being effected by the middle-class reviews" (237-8).

Hazlitt's radical political sentiments are usually seen to be inseparable from his commitment to an intellectual elitism in politics or art, an affiliation that compromises his democratic credentials. Critics explain Hazlitt's political values either by alluding to the constraints of his occupation (writing for a middle-class audience), which is what Dart seems to emphasise, and/or by referring to his upbringing in a radical dissenting

culture (he was the son of a Unitarian minister who was educated at Hackney College). Butler, Jones and Paulin all stress the importance of Hazlitt's Dissenting background in explaining his politics (Butler, *Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries* 144, 171-3; Jones 238; Paulin 3-14). Cook, one of Hazlitt's most sympathetic commentators, agrees that Hazlitt's critical outlook was limited by his ideas of liberty which are embedded in the liberal, individualistic values of freedom of speech and conscience, and free rational enquiry (151-2). Cook partly anticipates Dart's thesis when he suggests that Hazlitt "failed to respond to a radicalism whose source was in mass insurgency and not in the espousal of the cause of liberty by small groups of intellectuals" (152). Barrell, in *The Political Theory of Painting from Reynolds to Hazlitt*, and Whale, "Hazlitt on Burke: the Ambivalent Position of a Radical Essayist," argue that it is Hazlitt's commitment to aesthetics that conflicts with his political radicalism. Against the dominant view of Hazlitt, partly propagated by Hazlitt himself, as a detached and unsociable intellectual, Cox places Hazlitt within the "Cockney" group of "writers, artists and intellectuals organised loosely around Leigh Hunt and his various journals," a group including John Hunt, Percy and Mary Shelley, Byron, Godwin, Lamb, Keats, Benjamin Robert Haydon, John Scott, and Thomas Love Peacock (20-1). Cox argues that despite class differences based on rank and sources of income, these intellectuals were bound by political affinities (31, 48-50). One value they shared was a belief in collective and collaborative forms of cultural work--of which Hazlitt and Hunt's *Round Table* was an instance--which they saw as a

communitarian alternative to the isolation of workers and writers under a system of economic individualism (22, 60, 62). I follow Cox's view of Hazlitt rather than those that stress his extreme individualism, and I accept Cox's premise that "middle-class" ideology was hardly homogenous at this time. As I will point out, however, Hazlitt's sense of himself as an intellectual is articulated against fellow-travellers like Shelley and Byron, as well as against Burke, Coleridge, Bentham and Malthus, and that we should be wary of identifying "class" as an explanation for intellectual affiliations. As Jones laconically notes, as an intellectual Hazlitt does not belong, unambiguously, either to the working class or to the middle class (236).

² All references to Hazlitt's writings, unless otherwise stated, are to Howe's edition of the complete works which I cite by volume and page numbers.

³ On Hazlitt's comparison of Shakespeare and Jonson, see Natarajan (*Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense*, 64-5, 75). Natarajan's work is an especially strong statement of the idealist tendency in Hazlitt; for Natarajan, the entire basis of Hazlitt's metaphysics, as it is laid out in his *Essay on the Principles of Human Action* (1805), can be summarised as the "subordination of the senses to the mind" (11). Natarajan argues that the celebration of the transcendental power of the intellect (the exercise of the imagination), directed against the empirical basis of Benthamite utilitarianism, is the intellectual foundation and the principle of unity in all Hazlitt's writing (1-2, 176). I emphasise the polemical impulse behind all of Hazlitt's writings. In this I follow the

Quarterly Review, which criticised Hazlitt for allowing his politics to infect all his writings (*Quarterly Review* 26 [October 1821]: 103-8).

⁴ For a sustained discussion of the tension between liberal, individualistic and customary, embedded forms of selfhood, see Janowitz (1-9).

⁵ Siskin claims that, during the eighteenth century, the "hierarchical binary of mental over physical was reproduced within writing itself, splitting it into the creative versus the critical" (*The Work of Writing* 24-5). My argument is that in Hazlitt's writings this trope articulates a political and social rather than (or as well as) a generic distinction, so that Hazlitt aligns himself with the physical side of the binary to differentiate himself from his political foes.

⁶ I build on the insight of Kinnaird who argued that in the *Table Talk* essays, "Hazlitt was, in effect, bidding good-bye to the concept of 'intellectual' greatness as individual transcendence--to the heroic notion of genius as capable of realising and propagating its 'truth,' its 'idea' in the world through individual power alone" (299-300).

⁷ On the Romantics' contribution to the discursive constitution of the category "professional," see Siskin, "Wordsworth's Prescriptions," and Goldberg, "Romantic Professionalism." Goldberg quotes Byron as saying that Southey was the "only existing entire man of letters" (681). Southey, Goldberg explains, was "defined by his literary vocation. He depended on it for his living and for his social standing" (681). Hazlitt, just as dependent on writing as Southey for his income and status, defined

himself not as an "entire man of letters," but, less grandly, as a mere author (12: 208).

"I am unfit," he admitted to Francis Jeffrey in 1817, "for almost any other profession than that of an author" (*Letters* 175). To be a mere author was considered discreditable, as Jones points out, and the fact of writing for a living implied a difference in social status. "The want of a profession could only be excused on grounds of noble birth (as Byron and Shelley) or of having gone to one or other of the English Universities (as Wordsworth, Coleridge, Southey, and De Quincey)" (Jones 164).

⁸ In 1814, Hazlitt was paid twenty guineas a sheet for contributions to the *Edinburgh Review* (Jones 171n). In February 1822, while working on the second volume of *Table Talk*, Hazlitt figured he could "do ten pages a day, which mounts up to thirty guineas' worth a week" (9: 112). Could he have sustained this productivity, Grayling calculates, it would have amounted to relative affluence (258, 275). Hazlitt's letters, however, reveal his constant need to have advance payment on his lectures and books in order to devote his time to writing them (*Letters* 147, 182, 198, 211-12).

⁹ After Blackwood had refused his request to disclose the names of the authors of the article, Hazlitt commenced a libel suit against him as publisher, a suit which was eventually settled out of court. Although summoned to defend a suit for 2000 pounds damages by the Court of Session, Blackwood eventually paid 100 pounds to Hazlitt personally and accepted responsibility for costs. One immediate consequence of the article, Hazlitt discovered, was that Taylor and Hessey were now unwilling to pay the

200 pounds they had promised for the copyright of his lectures on the *English Comic Writers* (Jones 300, 304). Jones suggests additional repercussions of the *Blackwood's* article, such as the refusal of Taylor and Hessey to undertake the publication of his *Political Essays* volume of 1819 (304). Wu also remarks that the attacks made on Hazlitt by the Tory periodicals diminished the commercial value of his writings (203-4, 209). Howe believes that the decline in Hazlitt's popularity as a lecturer between his course of lectures on the *English Poets* and his third course of lectures on the *English Comic Writers* (December 1818-January 1819) was attributable to the attacks made on him by *Blackwood's* and the *Quarterly Review* (6: 367). Howe also suggests that the *Blackwood's* article may have been responsible for a breach between Hazlitt and Francis Jeffrey, editor of the *Edinburgh Review*. Hazlitt made no contribution to the *Edinburgh Review* between December 1818 and May 1820 and no political writings were invited from him after 1817 (7: 368).

¹⁰ Again, in 1821, Hazlitt was concerned that his *Table Talk* volume of essays might adversely affect his reputation, and importuned Jeffrey for a favourable review (*Letters* 209, 242-3). Hazlitt's falling out with Leigh Hunt in 1821 was a result, in part, of Hazlitt's perception that Hunt had not been as willing to promote Hazlitt as he himself had been in forwarding Hunt's reputation (*Letters* 204-6; 17: 317). On the other hand, Hazlitt pointed out, the "coterie" of reactionary writers affiliated to the *Quarterly Review* were always ready to puff one another, each fueling the reputation of each in a "vicious circle" (8: 211-12).

¹¹ As an example of Hazlitt's conscious "proletarianisation of himself," his cultivation of "a self-consciously low current," Dart points to Hazlitt's essay "On the Aristocracy of Letters," where "Hazlitt depicted the freelance journalists of London as a body of urban beggars, a kind of revolutionary *canaille*. And during the course of this essay he identified closely with this 'corporation of Mendacity'" (*Rousseau, Robespierre, and English Romanticism* 236-8). Marilyn Butler was the first to observe that Hazlitt's representations of himself are hard to separate from his calculations as a writer (*Romantics, Rebels, and Reactionaries* 172). Butler observes that the letters written by Hazlitt, which were eventually collected into his autobiographical epistolary novel *Liber Amoris*, "were clearly begun with at least half an eye toward publication" ("Satire and Images of Self" 216, 220).

¹² Hazlitt's even-handed critical strategy has raised the question of how we can extract any logic from his argumentative positions. While Natarajan defends the overall consistency of Hazlitt's writings, which is based on the underlying metaphysical belief in the mind's formative power (*Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense* 2-3), most critics have found it impossible to identify a consistent perspective. In Barrell's view, Hazlitt defends "a range of critical beliefs" in response to particular disputes (315-6). Gilmartin argues that Hazlitt's famed independence of mind is a "spectacular mobility," a critical flexibility, that makes it impossible to identify or position him as a writer; Hazlitt "alternately attacks and defends partisanship, public opinion, religious dissent, and even the legacy of Edmund Burke" ("Victims of Argument, Slaves of Fact" 91).

Dart insists that Hazlitt's writings are even more "self-contradictory" than previous critics have allowed (*Rousseau, Robespierre, and English Romanticism* 210). We should be careful, however, not to explain away Hazlitt's defence of opposite positions as a lack of strong commitment. I agree with Eagleton, who contends that Hazlitt keeps his critical terms flexible to counter the different ideological positions arrayed against him: his "antithetical style [. . .] expresses a dialectical rather than a vacillating mind" ("William Hazlitt" 115, 117).

¹³ In considering actual class difference (social origin) less important than political orientation in the dispute between Lockhart and the "Cockney" writers I follow Roe, Cox (31), and Wheatley (6).

¹⁴ Pascoe argues that the target of Hazlitt's "disavowal of ornament and ostentation are the 'theatrical,' indeed stagy, personas of the Della Cruscan" (93). For Pascoe, Hazlitt seeks to make poetic distinctions that are gendered (93). The question of style is more complicated than Pascoe suggests, however; Hazlitt has other targets in mind.

¹⁵ Adam Smith would have been an important influence on Hazlitt via what Paulin calls the "Dissenting counter-culture," and especially through his father who studied under Smith at the University of Glasgow (Paulin 68). In chapter six of *The Wealth of Nations*, where Smith breaks down the price of a commodity into its component parts of rent on land, profits on capital, and wages of labour, his one-class society gives way to a more realistic three-class society of landowners, capitalists, and

wage labourers (1: 68). By treating a class-divided society as a community of free and independent merchants, Smith was, as McNally observes, unwittingly formulating "one of the classic apologetic claims of vulgar bourgeois economics" (*Against the Market* 54-5). This is the ideological baggage that Hazlitt inherits when he appropriates Smith's figures of thought and speech.

¹⁶ Hazlitt's ambivalence about public opinion has been recorded many times. While Hazlitt views the diffusion of ideas and the growing strength of public opinion as a force for political liberty, he also envisions it as a tool for producing conformity at the expense of personal integrity and freedom of conscience. See, for example, "On Living to One's Self" (8: 97-100); "On the Disadvantages of Intellectual Superiority" (8: 284); "On Public Opinion" (17: 303-8); and "On the Causes of Popular Opinion" (17: 308-13). As I have suggested, however, the real targets of Hazlitt's attack are the opinion-makers: writers and intellectuals who manipulate public opinion.

¹⁷ Gilmartin argues that Hazlitt's social criticism is "meritocratic rather than levelling," although he points out, is not "by itself a rejection of plebeian radical culture which also endorsed terms like merit and talent" (*Print Politics* 228-9). We could go further than this. Perkin points out that while intellectuals articulated a social ideology based on merit, in the early-nineteenth century, merit extended to all systems of justification and signified differently to different groups. In terms of the professional ideal it connoted an expertise that could only be adequately measured by a jury of one's peers. On the other hand, merit could mean adjudication by a patron, success in

the impersonal market, or acceptance by one's fellow labourers (Perkin 258). In the quite general way in which Hazlitt uses the term, "merit" has little positive content, but signals, by force of contrast, dissatisfaction with the injustices of a particular system of selection and reward.

¹⁸ Hazlitt's frequent references to shoemakers might have been intended to invoke the traditional radicalism of the shoemakers, which was still, in the postwar period, among the largest single artisan trades (E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* 234, 255). In his mind, too, may have been the radical dramatist, Thomas Holcroft, whose memoirs Hazlitt completed after his death in 1809, and who was an apprentice shoemaker for a time before he attempted to make his living by literary labour.

¹⁹ It is certainly possible to reconcile the conflict of idleness and toil in Hazlitt's writings. For Paulin, for example, these characteristics are signs of the opposing qualities Hazlitt wants his prose to possess. Paulin argues that Hazlitt identifies prose writing with physical activity (boxing, rackets, juggling) to assuage his sense of the inferiority of prose to imaginative, poetic writing (87, 94, 269). Hazlitt aims for a strong, vigorous and muscular prose style, and the recurring image of the healthy body is intended to capture a vigorous and muscular writing and an upright Whiggish politics (21-2). In addition, Hazlitt's project is to redeem the prose style of radicals and Whigs, and to make the body stand for graceful, aesthetic qualities as well those sterner virtues: "He wants to incarnate the body in his prose so that his writing takes

on the body's fluid actions, its restful being or tense power" (281). Paulin draws attention, therefore, to Hazlitt's representation of prose writing both as sheer hard work (114-5, 154) and as indolence, ease or grace (185). Hazlitt wants "ruggedness and difficulty combined with graceful, flexible lightness" (26). Paulin's is a stimulating close analysis of Hazlitt's prose style, but my sense is that he moves too quickly over these rhetorical contradictions. The one point where Paulin pauses over the competing evaluatory principles at work in Hazlitt's criticism is in his discussion, at the end of the book, of the essay "On the Look of a Gentleman" (295).

Another way of reconciling labour and indolence in Hazlitt's writing is to argue--and Paulin implicitly makes this point (115, 194)--that Hazlitt is suggesting that there must be a rhythm of work and rest in any creative activity. However, labour and indolence are usually presented as competing versions, rather than as complementary aspects, of the same process. Hence, in "The Shyness of Scholars," Hazlitt remarks that "*Either* great things are accomplished with labour and pains, which stamp their impression on the general character and tone of feeling; *or* if this should not be the case (as sometimes happens), and they are the effect of genius and a happiness of nature, then they cost too little to be much thought of, and we rather wonder at others for admiring them, than at ourselves for having performed them" (emphasis added) (17: 260).

²⁰ Although he makes no acknowledgment, Barrell's argument may be assimilated to Bourdieu's more general assessment of intellectual practices. Bourdieu

has argued that intellectuals' struggles to maximize the autonomy of the cultural field and to raise the social value of their own specific competencies as cultural capital leads them to resist the idea of cultural democracy even if they mobilise the concepts of equality and political democracy against the dominant class. The logic of the cultural struggle which values rarity and distinction, therefore, tends to exclude the dominated class and legitimate class distinctions as cultural distinction ("The Market of Symbolic Goods" 19-23).

²¹ Gilmartin agrees with Barrell: Hazlitt's anxieties about merit and vulgar influence are "channelled from politics into culture, resulting in a split social vision" (*Print Politics* 229). Although, Gilmartin believes, Hazlitt was genuinely democratic in politics, his construction of the political field involved class prejudices articulated through cultural categories (227-9). Other critics who note the tension of politics and aesthetics in Hazlitt's work are Whale ("Hazlitt on Burke") and Dart ("Romantic Cockneyism" 158). Both Gilmartin and Dart concede, however, that on occasions, at least, Hazlitt happily resigned himself to the loss of aesthetic standards and to the inevitable "trade-off between high art and democratic politics" (Gilmartin, *Print Politics* 232; Dart, "Romantic Cockneyism" 159). Bate is right to say that Hazlitt was well aware of the potential for conflict in being both politically democratic and defending greatness in art (*Shakespearean Constitutions* 7).

²² Tenger and Trolander discuss the competition between the earlier concept of genius--genius as the variety of mental endowments rather than as originality--and the

theory of the division of labour during the mid-eighteenth century when, they claim, both discourses tried to "define and structure social and economic relation" (171).

²³Natarajan concurs: Hazlitt's stance is "not of detachment, but participation, in the very structures of power that are the subject of his critique" (*Hazlitt and the Reach of Sense* 178). As Dart points out, while Hazlitt might occasionally fantasise about the possibility of retirement, it was impossible for him to renounce the world in a Byronic gesture ("Romantic Cockneyism" 159).

Chapter Five. Daily Bread and Bread of Life:

Thomas Carlyle and the Labour of Guidance

"Our Whole Duty," Thomas Carlyle tirelessly reminded his countrymen, is "to work,--in the right direction" (*Sartor Resartus* 127). Labour, he urged, "is the mission of man on this earth" (*Works* 29: 133).¹ To work was not only a duty, painful and difficult, but was also potentially redemptive. Carlyle attached to even the meanest hand-labour a mystic significance, provided it was done wholeheartedly and in the spirit of service to one's fellow men: "All true work is sacred; In all true work, were it but true hand-labour, there is something of divineness. Labour, wide as the earth, has its summit in Heaven. Sweat of the brow; and up from that to sweat of the brain, [. . .] if this is not worship, then I say, the more pity for worship" (*Past and Present* 202). One source for Carlyle's "gospel of work" was his upbringing. The oldest son of poor, Scottish peasants, the Calvinistic belief in the importance of honest work had been instilled in him from an early age. After attending university to prepare for a ministerial vocation, and then deciding against the ministry, Carlyle sought a way of turning his education into a means of earning a living which would also fulfill the idea of a calling. The 1820s were, for Carlyle, a decade of great anxiety as he struggled to realise his sense of mission while living by literary hack-work (translation and reviewing) and private tutoring. Superimposed on the Calvinist doctrine of salvation in practical action was the influence of the German transcendentalists--Goethe, Schiller, Fichte--whom Carlyle read voraciously in the 1820s, and whose writings seemed to have helped

sustain him during this difficult time. Carlyle was especially indebted to Goethe's insistence that even in quotidian tasks lay the opportunity for expressing and developing one's special innate capacities, and hence his frequent iteration of Goethe's exhortation to do the nearest duty: "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy whole might" (*Sartor Resartus* 119, 196). Although, for Carlyle, the "sweat of the brow" was the "wholesomest blessing" rather than the "curse" it was for Burke, there is the same troubling attempt, in both writers, to encourage the physical worker to submit to his drudgery (*Collected Letters* 4: 246).²

Carlyle asserted, then, that the individual might find fulfillment in purposeful activity. His gospel of work was advanced, too, as a remedy for what he perceived to be the social ills of the nation: labour was the basis of a healthily functioning society. As Charles F. Harrold notes, Carlyle found in the Goethean doctrine of capabilities not only an ideal of self-realisation through discovering the work for which one had a specific aptitude, but also an ideal of social arrangement whereby each individual should labour obediently according to his abilities for the benefit of a society in which the apportioning of rewards would be just though unequal. This was Carlyle's ideal of order: "Recognised or not recognised a man *has* his superiors, a regular hierarchy above him; extending up, degree above degree, to heaven itself and God the Maker, who made His world not for anarchy but for rule and order" (*Sartor Resartus* lvi-lvii; 29: 189). Doing the duty nearest to hand meant labouring ardently in the station to which one was fitted by mental or physical powers. While his contemporaries pointed out that Carlyle's doctrine of work was hopelessly impractical as a solution to the

social problems he claimed to be addressing (Seigel 166-7, 208-10, 243), there is no question that Carlyle's recommendations were seriously intended. A healthy, orderly polity, he believed, would result from a right ordering of human relationships, founded on the correct distribution of work between the head and hands, between the governing, or "speaking," classes and the governed, or "toiling" classes (29: 168, 185). If one class of people produced material necessities, the other class ought to provide the no less necessary spiritual goods: "If the poor and humble toil that we have Food, must not the high and glorious toil for him in return, that he have Light, have Guidance, Freedom, Immortality?" (*Sartor Resartus* 228). The arrangement was a just one as long as these complementary labours were reciprocal and analogous. In his own day, Carlyle claimed, this relationship of reciprocity had ceased because the ruling class had failed to undertake the work of guidance: the speaking class had become an un-working one. In this chapter, I will focus my discussion of Carlyle's "work" by considering his use of the analogy between intellectual and physical labour as a vehicle for a political critique. Discussing three texts written in the 1830s--*Sartor Resartus* (1831-2), "The Corn Law Rhymes" (1832), and *Chartism* (1839)--I argue that Carlyle draws on the analogy between mental and manual to berate the ruling class for eschewing the work of guidance.³

In Carlyle's treatment, then, the assimilation of mental to manual work is both politically reactionary and politically radical. For him, as for Burke, the analogy is a way of urging the physical labourers to submit to their condition. However, the analogy is also, for Carlyle as for Hazlitt, a way of attacking the status quo. What I

wish to pursue, in this chapter, is the way the figures of speech equating mental and manual labour change their significance between *Sartor Resartus*, written at the beginning of the 1830s, and *Chartism*, composed at the end of the decade.

Throughout the 1830s Carlyle became more outspokenly antidemocratic as he moved towards the authoritarian stance of his most influential work of social criticism, *Past and Present* (1843), where, as Chris Vanden Bossche claims, in order to reform society Carlyle turns from inspiring belief to coercing obedience (113-5). Although the mental/ manual analogy continued to be a way for Carlyle to inveigh against the "unworking" ruling classes and to demand more effective government, the same metaphors serve a reactionary, authoritarian agenda. Carlyle increasingly overlooks, I shall suggest, the metaphorical nature of his identification of guiding work of the speaking classes with physical labour, and the literalisation of the analogy encourages the reader to think of the masses as material to be fashioned. Hannah Arendt, alert to the dangers of political rhetoric, has warned that the belief that we can make something in human affairs, as we fabricate a thing in the material world, is not a harmless metaphor; it arises from despair at the futility of the democratic process, and at political action in general, and leads to faith in the strong, isolated leader and to the utopian belief that humans can be treated and shaped as we treat other material (*The Human Condition* 188, 220-30). Curiously, however, in an early essay, "Signs of the Times," Carlyle had explicitly cautioned against the unreflective metaphoric conflation of mental and physical power. This leads me to suggest that Carlyle's provocative

rhetoric may have been intended to draw attention to the dangers of the figurative appropriation of physical labour in the representation of intellectual work.

I want to expand, first, on Carlyle's idiosyncratic diagnosis of the social malaise, which remained constant throughout his writings. In Carlyle's view, the French Revolution of 1789 epitomised the just revolt of the lower classes against the governing classes, and the latest embodiments of this rebellion were the signs of working class unrest in Britain in the 1830s. According to Carlyle, the feudal system of government had been a stable and enduring one, because it had been able to claim the willing obedience and loyalty of the populace. Both the temporal rulers, the king and nobility, and the spiritual rulers, the Clergy, had given real guidance to the people; the king and nobles kept order and enforced justice and the Clergy provided education and a set of beliefs for people to live by. For centuries prior to 1789, however, the two bodies had waived the work of governing, but had continued to draw the wages of governing, effectively boarding on the labour of the lower classes. Even worse, the former ruling class had continued to "cant" about religion and about loyalty as a way of keeping order among a lower class who had ceased to honour and reverence their social superiors (26: 215-16; *Past and Present* 225). The misery of the labouring population had been increasing for centuries, then, although they had remained silent until 1789. In the French Revolution, according to Carlyle, the masses found a rudimentary voice with which to express their dissatisfaction: "A dumb generation; their voice only an inarticulate cry" (2: 34); "this monstrous twenty-million class, hitherto the dumb sheep which these others had to disagree about the manner of

shearing, is now arising with hopes! It has ceased or is ceasing to be dumb; it speaks through Pamphlets, or at least brays and growls behind them, in unison" (2: 115-16).

In Carlyle's view, the Swing riots, Chartism, and other working class demonstrations of political and economic discontent were, like the French Revolution, the protest of the labouring population against the neglect of their political leaders (29: 149-50).

These events testified to the end of the social relation: "How have ye treated us; how have ye taught us, fed us and led us, while we toiled for you" (2: 227, 279).

The French Revolution, in Carlyle's interpretation, was occasioned both by philosophic scepticism (26: 416; 28: 180) and by the insupportable poverty of the labouring poor (2: 262). But these were immediate rather than original causes of the Revolution, symptoms rather of the larger phenomenon. It was the failure of leadership that had caused both the discontent of intellectuals and the hunger of the multitude. Through a sustained intellectual critique, the philosophes had negated the old, bankrupt religious beliefs, but had not, Carlyle averred, instilled new ideals, new principles on which to worship in their place. Similarly, the revolutionaries had not been able to create new institutions to replace the ones they had destroyed. Society, Carlyle always insisted, was held together by a common faith, by shared convictions or beliefs, which were embodied in its secular institutions, and in the absence of a shared social belief, society could not rejuvenate itself (2: 215-17; 28: 12-14, 42). Because the sceptical philosophy of the eighteenth century had failed to articulate ideals on which to base social cohesion, it was impossible that the revolutionists could have founded a new social order. Carlyle's view was a kind of idealism, since he believed

that there was always a spiritual malaise underlying and determining physical disease (28: 20-3). Nevertheless, spiritual deprivation always manifested itself, finally, in the material hardship of the labouring classes. Lies, untruth, Carlyle explained in *The French Revolution*, are always passed down, "shifted from back to back, and from rank to rank; and so land ultimately on the dumb lowest rank, who with spade and mattock, with sore heart and empty wallet, daily come in *contact* with reality, and can pass the cheat no further" (2: 65).

The old order was effectively dead, and a new one needed to be built. The void left by the collapse of feudal government, by the renunciation of leadership by the landed aristocracy and the Catholic priesthood, had to be occupied by a genuine working aristocracy. The solution to the problem of finding a new system of government was not democracy, which, for Carlyle, was a mere procedure. Democracy, or self-government of the multitude by the multitude, was a manifestation in the political sphere of the "principle" of laissez-faire, which was really the absence of any principle whatsoever (29: 158-9). The various ideologies of selfish individualism in social life were simply an abdication by the ruling class of the responsibility of governing and guiding.⁴ Neither economic self-interest nor the extension of the suffrage was an adequate principle of social integration; the vital element of society was not individual liberty but a living relationship between governing and governed (29: 160). Although Carlyle attacked, in particular, the dilettante landed aristocracy who protected their own financial interests, through legislation such as the Corn Laws, he also criticised the selfish, materialist, utilitarian

outlook of the industrial and commercial middle-classes, with their subordination of every ideal to profit.

Repugnance for the "blind chance" of laissez-faire also underlay Carlyle's criticism of the organisation of literature. The current unregulated condition of writers and their productions was the epitome of the disorganised condition of society, the "summary of all other disorganization--a sort of heart, from which, and to which, all other confusion circulates in the world" (5: 158-9, 168). Carlyle put great emphasis on society's treatment of its authors because he hoped that a properly organised literary class could fill the void left by the feudal clergy, become a modern priesthood who would infuse new ideals to regenerate society. "Since it is the spiritual always that determines the material, the Man-of-Letters Hero must be regarded as our most important modern person, [. . .] of all Priesthoods, Aristocracies, Governing Classes at present extant in the world, there is no class comparable for importance to that Priesthood of the Writers of Books" (5: 155, 168). On occasion, Carlyle seems to argue that writers had already become a modern clergy. The rise of print and the spread of literacy had conferred enormous influence on "writers of Newspapers, Pamphlets, Poems, Books," he argued, so that they had replaced priests as the "real working effective church" of a modern nation (5: 160-2, 170). Vanden Bossche observes that journalism, which Carlyle associated with the mechanisation of literature, could hardly be, at the same time, a true religion (45, 184n10). Indeed, Carlyle's point is exactly this. As things stood, it was the press, newspaper editors and journalists, who had become the effective rulers of the nation (*Sartor Resartus* 45; 27: 77). Power

was invested in the wrong people, and the predominance of journalists in society was a symptom of the absence of real values, of the dominance of the cash nexus. The noble calling of literature ought not to be undertaken for profit, nor degraded into a mere dilettantism.⁵

In time, perhaps, Carlyle himself might come to occupy the position of influence currently held by the press, but this was not the "strangely anomalous external position" in which he found himself at the beginning of the 1830s: "My whole trade is to think and *speak*," Carlyle wrote to John Stuart Mill in 1833, as he was trying unsuccessfully to find a publisher for his first book, *Sartor Resartus*, "but as the world goes, I have absolutely no permission to speak" (*Collected Letters* 7:25). His view that his position was an "anomalous" one was not eased by the publication of his novel, however. Carlyle's writings continually register his sense that the writer is an anomaly within a society organised around the reciprocal labour of its members. As Kaplan observes: "His Calvinistic heritage and his attitude towards work and the world had saddled him with ambivalent feelings about whether what he did as a writer was actually work" (361). In preaching the gospel of work, as Paul Barlow elaborates, Carlyle "advocates a condition from which his own advocacy necessarily alienates him" (138). Despite Carlyle's veneration of thinking over doing that was the corollary of his valorisation of the spiritual over the material, he was also fond of citing Goethe's maxim that "doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by Action" and the Aristotelian adage that "the end of man is an Action, and not a Thought" (*Sartor Resartus* 196, 155; 28: 25). It was not clear, to Carlyle, that thinking and speaking

count as action or doing in any ordinary sense, so, rather than claiming to do anything, he represents himself as showing others what needs to be done.⁶

Sartor Resartus was written in 1830-31 as Parliament was considering the first reform bill. Carlyle was unable to get the manuscript published as a book--it eventually appeared serially in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1833-34--and he attributed his failure to find a publisher to the political uncertainty of the times (*Collected Letters* 5: 327, 376, 436; 6: 16, 24, 64; Kaplan 161-6). Many intellectuals believed that revolution was imminent unless reform passed parliament, a fear substantiated by the July Revolution in France. The point is often made, and it is a claim supported by his own statements, that Carlyle believed in "radical *inward* reform" rather than in tinkering with the machinery of government (*Collected Letters* 5: 204; 27: 72). While Carlyle's social criticisms are frequently tempered by the qualification that it is only the reform of each individual of himself that can really change society, the extent of his dissatisfaction with the status quo--his detestation of the corrupt ruling class and his sympathy with the plight of the industrial and agricultural poor--should not be underestimated. Carlyle was a radical in the sense that he believed that society had to be fundamentally altered. "A second edition of the French Revolution," he wrote in 1831, "is distinctly within the range of chances; for there is nowhere any tie remaining among men" (*Collected Letters* 6: 52). Society had to be regulated by more viable bonds than the cash nexus: reverence for one's superiors, for example, duty to one's inferiors, and loyalty between classes. Social revolution would be one way of clearing away the unsupportable system that

existed, preparatory to building a new social order (*Collected Letters* 5: 144-5, 6: 85, 128; Kaplan 154-7, 184-5).⁷

The ending of *Sartor Resartus* dramatises Carlyle's sense of the increasing polarisation between the social classes of England in the highly metaphorical style of Diogenes Teufelsdröckh, the fictional German philosopher and protagonist of the novel. Rich and poor are ironically presented as though they were competing speculative or religious tendencies: the Dandiacal Sect, dedicated to idleness and excess, and the Drudge or Poor-slave Sect, dedicated to labour and poverty:

Such are the two Sects which, at this moment, divide the more unsettled portion of the British People; and agitate that ever-vexed country. To the eye of the political Seer, their mutual relation, pregnant with the elements of discord and hostility, is far from consoling, [. . .] they extend through the entire structure of Society, and work unweariedly in the secret depths of English national Existence; striving to separate and isolate it into two contradictory, uncommunicating masses. (285)

Teufelsdröckh likens the two Sects to two bottomless whirlpools whose diameter was daily widening to devour between them all the solid ground of the country; or, in another metaphor, describes them as being like positive and negative poles of batteries dividing the country between wealth and hunger, until there exists no healthy neutral ground (286; 28: 20-1). *Sartor Resartus* seems to end in a revolutionary situation, with the refusal by the ruling classes of their duty of government and the increasing repulsion of the lower classes from their erstwhile rulers. Teufelsdröckh seems to

offer no solutions and appears to accept the necessity of revolution. However, Carlyle often keeps an ironic distance from his protagonist. As Janice Haney has argued, in the final three chapters of the novel Carlyle turns deliberately away from a Romantic irony that "apotheosizes self-activity," and, instead, "gives us social actuality and demands that we work in it" (328-9). Carlyle's writings after *Sartor Resartus* consistently take up in a serious way the problem that is posed half-ironically at the end of that book.⁸

However, while Teufelsdröckh is apparently dismissed at the conclusion of the novel, Carlyle's own answer to the problem of authority is apparently adumbrated within *Sartor Resartus* by Teufelsdröckh. Because it describes the ideal relationship of guiders and guided, this important passage is worth quoting at length. "Two men I honour, and no third," declares the clothes philosopher:

First, the toilworn Craftsman that with earth-made Implement labouriously conquers the Earth, and makes her man's. Venerable to me is the hard Hand, crooked, coarse; wherein notwithstanding lies a cunning virtue [. . .].

Venerable too is the rugged face, all weather-tanned, besoiled, with its rude intelligence; for it is the face of a Man living manlike. O, but the more venerable for thy rudeness, and even because we must pity as well as love thee! Hardly-entreated Brother! For us was thy back so bent, for us were thy straight limbs and fingers so deformed: thou wert our Conscript, on whom the lot fell, and fighting our battles wert so marred. For in thee too lay a god-created Form, but it was not to be unfolded; encrusted must it stand with the thick adhesions and defacements of Labour: and thy body, like thy soul, was not to

know freedom. Yet toil on, toil on: *thou* art in thy duty, be out of it who may; thou toilest for the altogether indispensable, for daily bread.

A second man I honour, and still more highly: Him who is seen toiling for the spiritually indispensable; not for daily bread, but the bread of Life. Is not he too in his duty; endeavouring towards inward Harmony; revealing this, by act or by word, through all his outward endeavours, be they high or low? Highest of all, when his outward and inward endeavour are one; when we can name him Artist; not earthly Craftsman only, but inspired Thinker, who with heaven-made implements conquers Heaven for us! If the poor and humble toil that we have Food, must not the high and glorious toil for him in return, that he have Light, have Guidance, Freedom, Immortality? (227-8)

Despite Carlyle's ironic distance from Teufelsdröckh, he would certainly have approved of the social relationship evoked in this passage. The society Teufelsdröckh foresees is based on an exchange of labours which, if different and complementary, are posited as equal and analogous: food for enlightenment and guidance. As Harrold observes in his introduction to *Sartor Resartus*, the two forces indispensable in the reconstruction of a decayed society were physical labour and the new church of literature: the one to supply material necessities, the other to give knowledge, education, and moral purpose, without which nothing of lasting worth could be achieved by mere strength of arms (l-li; *Sartor Resartus* 229). Carlyle's passage also indicates where his intuitive sympathies lie: with the hard-working, impoverished labouring population and with the man of letters trying to make a living in the modern

world (Kaplan 156). Teufelsdröckh implies that the intellectual (or “spiritual”) worker is allied with the impoverished classes; his trade--like Hazlitt, Carlyle consistently refers to writing as a “trade” (*Collected Letters* 7: 25)--and his impoverishment seem to align him naturally with other workmen. This alliance makes the revolutionary situation at the end of the book more threatening, for the view that the dissatisfaction of intellectuals instigated the overthrow of the *ancien regime* in France was a common one, powerfully articulated by Burke, and one that Carlyle himself had occasionally expressed (26: 416).

Carlyle is adroit at insinuating himself into a discourse from which he had seemed to be absent. This passage encourages the reader to see Carlyle himself as the “spiritual” labourer. In his perceptive 1847 review of Carlyle's works, a review which delighted Carlyle, Henry David Thoreau recognised that Carlyle saw himself as the “inspired thinker” of *Sartor Resartus*. Quoting the above passage in full, and employing the same metaphor (“bread of life”) as Carlyle had used in the original passage, Thoreau nominated Carlyle as a real working literary man:

There is no more notable working-man in England, in Manchester or Birmingham, or the mines round about. We know not how many hours a day he toils, nor for what wages exactly; we only know the results for us [. . .]. Literature has come to mean to the ears of labouring men, something idle, something cunning and pretty merely, because the nine-hundred and ninety-nine really write for fame or for amusement. But as the labourer works, and

soberly by the sweat of the brow earns bread for his body, so this man *works* anxiously and *sadly*, to get bread of life, and dispense it. (243-4)

In reproducing Carlyle's writerly self image so faithfully, here and throughout the review, Thoreau seems to take Carlyle's metaphors at face value. I want to suggest, however, that Carlyle's figurative performance is far from unreflective. "It is not because of his toils that I lament for the poor," Teufelsdröckh continues in this same passage, "we must all toil [. . .] no faithful workman finds his task a pastime" (228). However, the spiritual labourer cannot be "seen toiling [. . .] for bread of life" in quite the same way that the manual worker can be seen producing food, clothing, and shelter (*Sartor Resartus* 227). We can recall that in Ford Madox Brown's painting, *Work* (Figure 1), what distinguishes the "brain-workers," like Carlyle, is that they "seem to be idle" (Hueffer 189-90). In what way, then, are physical labour and intellectual labour related as toil? What kind of workman is the writer?

While it would be difficult to isolate one meaning of "work" in *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle's first programmatic statement of his doctrine of work, the notion of making order out of disorder, gathers together several of his ideas. Capabilities were given to each man, says Teufelsdröckh:

to give battle, in some small degree, against the great Empire of Darkness:
does not the very Ditcher and Delver, with his spade extinguish many a thistle
and puddle; and so leave a little Order, where he found the opposite? [. . .].
How much more, one whose capabilities are spiritual, who has learned, or

begun learning, the grand thaumaturgic art of Thought! [. . .]. Truly a Thinking

Man is the worst enemy the Prince of Darkness can have. (118)

As the manual labourer makes a fertile land out of wilderness, the writer creates order by revealing the idea of a moral or divine purpose in a seemingly chaotic world, and instills in his fellow men high ideals and convictions. Again it is the intellectual or spiritual that is singled out for particular praise: "in this so solid-seeming world [. . .] it is appointed that *Sound*, to appearance the most fleeting, should be the most continuing of all things. The WORD is well said to be omnipotent in this world: man, thereby divine, can create as by a *Fiat*" (171-2, 199). Appropriately, then, Teufelsdröckh's discovery of his life-work as a writer of books is the first climax of the novel: he will attempt to create a new religion for men to live by. In finding what he can work at he not only finds his identity, an ordered self, but also plays his part in ordering and subduing the chaotic universe. "Be no longer a Chaos, but a World," Teufelsdröckh tells himself, "Produce! Produce! Were it but the pitifullest infinitesimal fraction of a Product, produce it, in God's name!" (197). The new "priesthood" of writing, Teufelsdröckh makes clear, can only be fulfilled by the true poet, working out of a sense of duty rather than for fame or money. This high calling is degraded into a mere "handicraft" by journalists and other literary day-labourers (199).

Despite Teufelsdröckh's disdainful dismissal of mercenary and hack writing as "handicraft"--earlier in the novel he dismisses his overly-pedantic schoolteachers as "hodmen" (105)--Carlyle, through his protagonist, brazenly assimilates the intellectual and physical labourer. The description of the artist as "toiling for [. . .] the bread of

Life " seems to "offer an idealization," in Frederic Jameson's phrase, of writing and cultural production as material labour, and gives substance to the idea of the "inspired thinker" (*Sartor Resartus* 228; Jameson, "On Negt and Kluge" 56-7). Further, the dogged English editor who, in Carlyle's fiction, is charged with laboriously making order out of Teufelsdröckh's chaotic philosophical creation, *Die Kleider, Ihr Werden und Werken* (Clothes: their Origin and Influence), and of "transplanting" it into English soil, frequently complains that his "incessant toils" have affected his health (34, 79-80). It is not difficult to show that the appropriation of the toil of the manual labourer underlies the construction of literary labour in *Sartor Resartus*. Furthermore, I suggest, through his protagonist's representations Carlyle makes transparent the problematic nature of the assimilation of mental to manual labour. For example, Teufelsdröckh's admonishment to himself to "produce, produce" (197) anticipates his words of encouragement to the toilworn craftsman to "toil on, toil on" (228). By urging both himself, the writer, and the physical labourer to "toil on," Teufelsdröckh treats both manual and literary labour as if they were responsive to the same enthusiastic injunction to work. The exhortation to "toil on," one would think, can only be an appropriate incitement to someone for whom work is potentially a reward in itself, a vocation; no such injunction can reconcile the manual worker to his drudgery. Only poverty and necessity, what Teufelsdröckh himself calls the "prompt nature of hunger" (*Sartor Resartus* 120), can compel pain, trouble, and deformation of the body. On the other side, Teufelsdröckh's exhortation to himself to "produce, produce" is curious because the principle of "more is better," which might apply to the

production of bread or cotton, is not appropriate for the evaluation literary production, where evidence of real labour, as Carlyle himself insisted, is not more but less product (29: 26-8, 33, 73-4).

Although Teufelsdröckh does unquestionably present Carlyle's own views on just social arrangements in the passage on the physical and spiritual labourers, the use of a persona, I argue, allows Carlyle to maintain an ironic scepticism about the figures of speech used to depict mental work and to construe the relation of the two workers to each other. Teufelsdröckh's questions--"must not the high and glorious toil for him in return?"--suggest the tentative nature of the analogy which underlies the principle of reciprocation. This leaves the reader some room, if not for dissenting from the principle of reciprocity itself, then at least for questioning the sufficiency of what Carlyle terms the "imperfect" medium of language--even of highly figurative language--for describing the social bond, the mystical union of man and man (28: 12). In a novel that contains a metaphorical reflection on metaphor, it is probably safe to say that Carlyle's openly metaphoric representations of intellectual activity are not made unreflectively (*Sartor Resartus* 73-4). This is a point to which I will return throughout this chapter.

The key passage on the spiritual and earthly labourers also has a third component. Carlyle immediately goes on to say that nothing is more sublime than finding the two kinds of labour united in the "Peasant Saint," who both toils "outwardly for the lowest of man's wants" and toils "inwardly for the highest" (227-8). Both manual and spiritual labour are united in the Peasant Saint, who "combines the

creative powers of the artist with the forceful labour of the craftsman" (Mellor 118). The honoured peasant-saint poses a problem for Carlyle's neat division of the classes, however. What becomes of the relation of the governed and the governing when the poor begin to think, to speak, to write, to become capable of self-guidance? Carlyle's ideal community depends on each knowing his place in the social division of labour; the relationship is based on silent and unquestioning acceptance by both parties of the arrangement, for manual workers are supposed to recognise and acknowledge superior wisdom when they see it. But the figure of the Peasant Saint suggests that some poor people are already capable of both labour and guidance, of producing both daily bread and the bread of life (poetry, say).

This problem arises in different forms throughout Carlyle's writing in the 1830s. The labouring classes were beginning to find a collective voice and throughout the decade they articulated their grievances--their dissatisfaction at political disenfranchisement and their desperation at poverty and unemployment--both through direct action and through petitioning parliament. For Carlyle, working class speech, the assumption by the labouring class of the activity of their superiors, whatever else it might herald, was a sure sign of disorder in social relations, embodying a challenge to the distinction between knowing and doing, and threatening the occupation of the speaking and thinking class. The question of who has "permission to speak" (*Collected Letters* 7: 25), therefore, is not only an issue, for Carlyle, of establishing his own authority as an author, but also of marking the boundaries which separate the activities of the governing and the governed. The two issues are closely linked, however, since

one of Carlyle's strategies for authorising his own voice is to claim to be speaking for the inarticulate toiling classes. I want to look in detail at two of Carlyle's responses to evidence of working class speech, his article on Ebenezer Elliott's "Corn-Law Rhymes," ostensibly an appreciation of the cultural achievement of a working class poet, and *Chartism*, an essay in which he addresses directly the worsening plight of the working poor. Although both pieces continue to see the social crisis as the fault of an "unworking" ruling class, and while Carlyle seeks to reform that class into a true working aristocracy, I want to attend particularly to the perceptible shift in Carlyle's political sympathy, insofar as this sympathy is signified by his different deployment of the analogy between mental and manual work.

Carlyle's article on Ebenezer Elliott's "Corn-Law Rhymes" was written and published in the *Edinburgh Review* in 1832 while *Sartor Resartus* was still in manuscript. While Carlyle, like other middle-class reviewers, treats Elliott as though he were a genuine working-class poet, an identification which Elliott might have encouraged, it should be pointed out that Elliott was in fact a small capitalist and employer who owned his own iron foundry in Sheffield (Vicinus 97, Maidment 48-9). In some respects, this fact is not germane to the article, for Elliott's importance to Carlyle is that he is a representative figure for an increasingly vocal labouring class. The phenomenon Carlyle is addressing in this essay is not only that of the talented artisan, but of the coming-to-consciousness of an entire class of manual labourers, for which Carlyle, mistakenly, takes Elliott to be the representative. In "Corn-Law Rhymes," anticipating his argument in *The French Revolution*, Carlyle declares that

the "hitherto mute and irrational" have found an intelligible voice (28: 138), but he also claims that this voice is not yet aware of its own interests. His sympathy for the plight of the labouring poor vies with his need to put working-class speech in its place and to preserve the proper ordering of social activity. The article shows Carlyle at his best, as he tries to contain the contradictions that his conflicting agendas produce.⁹

In 1829 Carlyle had published a generous, though deeply contradictory, assessment of another self-educated poet, Robert Burns. "Burns" is a celebration of achievement under conditions of adversity, but the essay also contains an explicit social criticism, for Carlyle argues that social circumstances are crucial in determining literary success. Burns struggled under poverty and without education, so his genius was wasted in unrewarding and unrewarded toil (26: 258, 262-3). At a time when the power of thinking is in short supply, and which is at all times what is most wanted, Burns is told by his superiors "'You are to work, not think.' Of your thinking faculty, the greatest in the land, we have no need; you are to gauge beer there; for that only you are wanted" (5: 197). The example of Burns supports Carlyle's attack on the laissez-faire system of authorship as an institution, and, more generally, on the inequality of opportunity in society.¹⁰ Characteristically, Carlyle qualifies his social criticism, however, by arguing that the real fault lies in Burns himself, in inward, not outward, circumstances (26: 264, 310-11). Poverty, hardship, incessant drudgery, and persecution have been the lot of many great poets. Burns fails for want of moral strength; he lacks "unity in his purposes [and] consistency in his aims" (291-5, 310-18). Carlyle advises that Burns might have succeeded had he divided his time between

poetry and virtuous industry, reconciling himself to a life of labour while being content to fulfill his calling (314-15). This is precisely the ground for Carlyle's professed admiration of Elliott, who divides his time between producing daily bread (iron) and bread of life (poetry).

In "Corn-Law Rhymes," as in *Sartor Resartus*, Carlyle thinks of labour as the imposition of order on a chaotic world: "A troublous element is his. A life of painfulness, toil, insecurity, scarcity; yet he fronts it like a man; yields not to it, tames it into some subjection, some order" (147). Elliott is admired because he labours both at composing poetry and at hammering metal, "is a man who can handle both pen and hammer like a man" (139); "there shall he stand, and work, with head and with hand" (145). The manual labourer has begun to speak as well as to work, and Elliott's voice is worth listening to, not because he rises above his condition but because he represents clearly authentic working-class experience:

Here is a voice coming from the deep Cyclopean forges, where Labour, in real soot and sweat, beats with his thousand hammers "the red son of the furnace;" doing battle with Necessity, and her dark brute Powers, to make them reasonable and serviceable; an intelligible voice from the hitherto Mute and Irrational, to tell us at first-hand how it is with him, what in very deed is the theorem of the world and of himself, which he, in those dim depths of his, in that wearied head of his, has put together. To which voice [. . .] let good ear be given. (138)

Like Burns' poetry, Elliott's writing is sincere and genuine; he is "an earnest truth-speaking man [. . .] a practical man of work and endeavour" who delivers himself "articulately, and with a certain degree of meaning" (145, 138). It is the experience and knowledge of real physical labour which is the basis of this sincerity. From having worked he has obtained "authentic insight and experience, [. . .] rugged and homegrown understanding;" this man "has worked himself loose of cant and conjectural halfness, idle pretences and hallucinations, into a condition of Sincerity" (146).

Whereas Carlyle had lamented Burns' poverty and lack of education, now he argues that education is a disadvantage for a man who wants to be a writer (139). It is not education but work and struggle--"were it only with poverty and hard toil"--which is required. It is a fact, says Carlyle, that "he, whose other wants were beforehand supplied; to whose capabilities no problem was presented except even this, How to cultivate them to the best advantage, should attain less real culture than he whose first grand problem and obligation was nowise spiritual culture, but hard labour for his daily bread!" (141). The purely cultured man is likely to be a literary dilettante, while the writer who has to support himself through manual labour will be in earnest about literature. Here, as throughout the article, Carlyle plays on the meaning of "culture." "In the vocabulary of land-farming and husbandry, culture meant activity, effort, purposeful action," Bauman tells us, "to culture (cultivate) land, meant to select good seed, to sow, to till, to plough, to fight weeds and undertake all the other actions deemed necessary to secure an ample and healthy crop" (Bauman 94). Carlyle

frequently resorts to husbandry metaphors to convey the idea that it is through labour, not learning, that the individual acquires "real culture." Summary will not do justice to Carlyle's rhetoric; his prose must be quoted:

All woodmen [. . .] will tell you that fat manure is the ruin of your oak;
likewise that the thinner and wilder your soil, the tougher, more iron-textured
is your timber, [. . .] so too with the spirit of men [. . .] he who has battled,
were it only with poverty and hard toil, will be found stronger, more expert,
than he who could stay at home from the battle, concealed among the
Provision-wagons. (28: 140-1)

The source of all knowledge and cultivation, Carlyle insists, is practical work, were this only the humblest "hewing of wood and drawing of water" (146). The reader might be forgiven for supposing that it is the working classes who should be offering guidance to their superiors:

the first principle of human culture, the foundation-stone of all but false
imaginary culture, that men must, before every other thing, be trained to *do*
somewhat, has been, for some generation, laid quietly on the shelf [. . .]
consider what advantage those same uneducated Working classes have over
the educated Un-working classes, in one particular; herein, namely, that they
must work. To work! What incalculable sources of cultivation lie in that
process [. . .]. He that has done nothing has known nothing [. . .]. Truly a
boundless significance lies in work; whereby the humblest craftsman comes to

attain much, which is of indispensable use, but which he who is of no craft, were he never so high, runs the risk of missing. (143)

If knowing comes from doing, where does this leave the trade of thinking and speaking? If education is not an advantage, what kind of benefits do the labouring classes receive from guidance? Maidment notes that Carlyle menaces, with accounts of Elliott's radical energy, a middle-class already nervous about labour insurgency (297). He also informs them of the source of working-class discontent: the educated classes had neglected the work of governing responsibly. If the educated are content to remain an "Un-working" class, then the working class are capable of cultivating and guiding themselves. Elliott manages his own cultivation; the labourer who provides daily bread is also the best provider of bread of life.

Carlyle's sympathy with the working class, afflicted by poverty and the threat of the workhouse, is real enough. It was not, in his opinion, the governed but the governing who were failing to fulfill their part of the social compact (158-9). As the article continues, however, it becomes clear that Carlyle's tirade against education is really an incitement to the ruling class to put their education to work. Consequently, there is a movement in the article, pulling against his praise for the labouring poet; although Elliott is described as articulate and intelligible and cultivated, Carlyle also attempts to belittle his intellectual capacity in order to make room for the work of the thinking class. It is not possible for Carlyle to ignore the political thrust of Elliott's poetry--he is a "Reformer, at least stern Complainer, Radical to the core," grimly indignant at his suppressed rights (148)--so he depicts Elliott as having little political

acumen, as possessing no more than an instinct for injustice (148-50). Carlyle admonishes Elliott for his vituperative and sarcastic manner, his tone of "pert snappishness," his anger and uncharitableness (154-55, 166). Although he concedes that Elliott's experience of hard, unremitting labour might be one cause of his anger, he dismisses this as an excuse: "for what man [. . .] is not hard worked?" (154-5). Having established that what distinguishes Elliott is his "life of painfulness and toil," now Carlyle paradoxically, though quite characteristically, claims that this is not a distinction; as in *Sartor Resartus*, he universalises the necessity of labour: "we all must toil" (*Sartor Resartus* 228-9). Carlyle advises his reader to pay no heed to Elliott's analysis of the social and political malaise. He feels, as all men do, the disorganised state of society, but, like other complainers, he sees only the evil nearest him. Repealing the bread tax, however necessary, will not of itself deliver society from its present state of dissolution. Only true guidance by intellectual superiors will do that (28: 149-50, 163).

As the essay progresses, much less importance is attached to Elliott's voice, to his ability to speak and write. Not only is his political philosophy inchoate, his poetry is unintelligible. Of Elliott's long poem, *The Village Patriarch*, Carlyle says it is an "inarticulate, half-audible epic," "imperfectly sung" (161-2). In the poem, meaning "lies struggling" and needs interpretation to make out the "real purport of his message" (162-3). *The Village Patriarch* is an epic of the times; the true epic of the industrial age is of man fighting, like Enoch Wray, the protagonist of Elliott's poem, not against other men but to subdue disorder and chaos: not "Arms and the Man," but "Tools and

the Man" is the modern epic (162). "What indeed are tools," inquires Carlyle, "from the Hammer and Plummet of Enoch Wray, to this Pen we now write with, but Arms, wherewith to do battle against UNREASON without or within, and smite in pieces not miserable fellow men, but the Arch-Enemy that makes us all miserable; henceforth the only legitimate battle" (162). This is the moment at which Carlyle places himself into his own discourse. Whereas Elliott had been the one to handle both hammer and pen, to bring order to his chaotic world, here Carlyle's pen is likened to Enoch's hammer and makes order of Elliott's chaotic epic. It is Carlyle who interprets both Elliott's "half-audible" poetry and his half-formed political views.

Carlyle acknowledges that there are some, presumably only a few, members of the ruling classes who do work in exchange for their exemption from manual labour. "Among our Aristocracy there are men [. . .] who feel they also are work-men, born to toil, ever in the great Taskmaster's eye, faithfully with heart and head, for those that with heart and hand do [. . .] toil for them" (163). As in *Sartor Resartus*, the speaking classes justify themselves by labouring in their own province as the labouring class must do in theirs. The work of the head, now sundered from the work of the hand, is the noblest and hardest work of all: it is toiling to deliver out of "bondage to Wretchedness and Ignorance and Sin, the hardhanded millions; of whom this hardhanded earnest witness and writer is here representative" (163). The duty of the ruling class is to "lovingly interpret" Elliott's obscure, "dark" message so that they might understand the demands of the lower class (163). This, of course, is what Carlyle has just done. It is worth noting just how inconsistent is Carlyle's

representation of Elliott, whose thinking and speaking capacity disappears as he reverts to a mere hand-labourer. Although Carlyle rebuked Elliott for his vituperative tone, he qualifies this criticism by purporting to find in him a principle of religion and reverence, of loyalty towards his true superiors (150). If Carlyle intends to alarm his readers by his depiction of Elliott's radicalism, he also recommends the Corn-Law Rhymer to the "loving" guidance of his superiors by presenting him as an honest and independent worker, a radical "not without devoutness; passionate, affectionate, thoroughly in earnest" (160; *Collected Letters* 6: 116).

There are members of the ruling class, however, who do not feel themselves to be "workmen, born to toil" (163). Addressing this "unworking" aristocracy, at the end of the article, Carlyle cites the fable of Balaam the Mesopotamian soothsayer from the *Book of Numbers*, for he can find no other historical parallel to the present situation (163-5). Carlyle's use of religious and mythical fables, it must be said, is often obscure. This biblical story records the Israelite sojourn in the wilderness, during which the Israelite tribes are encamped on the plain of Moab (22.1-24.25). Balak, king of Moab, sends messengers to ask Balaam to lay a curse on the Israelites to help him to defeat them. Against God's instructions, Balaam agrees, but the ass carrying Balaam to Moab refuses to pass a point in the road because she sees the Angel of the Lord with a drawn sword in hand blocking the path. Balaam beats the ass repeatedly until God opens the animal's mouth: "Am I not your ass, upon which you have ridden all your life long?" The Angel then appears to Balaam and says that the ass has saved his life by turning away from the path. Balaam repents and God allows him to proceed to Moab on

condition that he bless rather than curse the Israelite tribes. Carlyle apparently finds resemblance between the biblical story and the way the working-class, through Elliott, had spoken to the ruling class: "His Ass not only on the sudden stood stock-still defying spur and cudgel, but *began to talk*, and that in a reasonable manner" (164).¹¹ The point of his rendering of the Balaam story in the context of his article on Ebenezer Elliott might be to summarise the warning of the article as a whole. The ass is an appropriate emblem for the working class because it literally carries, or supports, the idle, unproductive aristocracy. Carlyle suggests that the traditional prejudice and complacency of the aristocracy will be eroded by this unprecedented act of a member of the working class beginning to speak. "'Farewell," Balaam laments, "to all my greatness: the spirit-stirring Vote, ear-piercing Hear; the big Speech that makes ambition virtue [. . .] Balaam's occupation gone" (164-5). A speaking working class, as it were, makes the traditional distinction of thinking and doing untenable; if the working class can speak, then the speaking class must actually work. The aristocracy, he implies, must find new ways of treating and relating to the poor, or must offer more substantial guidance. They cannot assume that the mere ability to speak justifies their privilege; nor will beatings and hectorings, as if the working class were an ass, suffice in a democratic era.

Insofar as it presents a parallel for the relationship of the classes, however, the story is a curious one. The "occupation" of the traditional aristocracy is not literally threatened by the lower-class writer. The democratisation of writing and speaking is really a threat to intellectuals, like Carlyle, whose cultural capital depended entirely on

their claim to be the providers of knowledge. The fable, like the article as a whole, therefore, strives to protect the role of the literary seer. Like the ass, the working-class poet speaks in a reasonable manner only because of the intervention of another agent. Elliott, as a representative of the working class, speaks, but his own inarticulate speech is only recognisable speech when Carlyle interprets the message and translates it. Real culture, Carlyle had averred, belonged not to those who had leisure to read and write merely, but to someone who had also to labour. Elliott is praised throughout the article for fusing labour and poetry, for producing his daily bread as well as the bread of life (141). The alloy of material labour initially made Elliott's voice worth listening to. Finally, however, the amalgamation of labour and speech--the assimilation of Elliott's pen to his hammer--makes his voice only half-intelligible. It is Carlyle who interprets the message of the working class poet. The mediation of a translator is required, the services of one whose "first grand problem" is indeed spiritual culture: thought and speech (141). The article ends by imagining the reassertion of order, as the thinking classes take on, once more, the work of guidance, so that Elliott can go back to producing brass and iron.

In "Corn Law-Rhymes," the writer-critic, Carlyle himself, "works" only inasmuch as he represents the wants of the working class to the ruling class. Carlyle's claim to have access to the wants of the working class adds weight to Carlyle's own voice, makes *him*, rather than Elliott, worth listening to. This is a strategy that Carlyle repeats later in 1839 when he writes on Chartism, the largely working-class suffrage movement. *Chartism* announces a more authoritarian tone in Carlyle's writing. He is

still arguing, ostensibly at least, that the problem is that the ruling-class has abdicated real leadership, and he evokes the analogy between mental and manual labour in order to incite the country's governing class to work at guidance as other (material) labourers work in their own sphere. Carlyle's sympathy with the condition of the working class is still real enough in *Chartism*; however, there is a change in emphasis in Carlyle's view, as he implies, at least, that the main problem was a thriftless labouring class which required effective regulation. One way of registering the change in Carlyle's thinking is to notice the different purposes for which he employs the analogy between mental and manual labour, and one way of explaining this difference, I propose, is to suggest that Carlyle overlooks, whether deliberately or not, the figurative status of the analogy.

To explain my argument, I want briefly to consider "Signs of the Times" (1829), Carlyle's first major work of social criticism, in which he attacks the materialistic and mechanistic outlook of the age. Carlyle's thesis is that his own era is characterised by an overweening faith in mechanism and machinery and by the worship of physical things, and his main criticism is that humans err in applying the same principles to the improvement of their moral life as they have devoted to the improvement of the material labour process: "By our skill in Mechanism, it has come to pass, that in the management of external things we excel all other ages; while in whatever respects the pure moral nature, in true dignity of soul and character, we are perhaps inferior to most civilised ages" (27: 73). Intellectual, spiritual, or moral strength, he maintains, cannot be increased by the aid of the same mechanical

contrivance by which we increase physical capacity. The whole lamentable situation that Carlyle describes turns out to have an idealistic cause:

Civil government does by its nature include much that is mechanical, and must be treated accordingly. We term it indeed, in ordinary language, the Machine of Society, and talk of it as the grand working wheel from which all private machines must derive, or to which they must adapt, their movements.

Considered merely as a metaphor, all this is well enough; but here, as in so many cases, "the foam hardens into the shell," and the shadow we have wantonly evoked stands terrible before us and will not depart at our bidding.

(66)

Conventional ways of speaking and of seeing in one sphere of human activity come to prevail over the entire range of human action, Carlyle argues. Because society is customarily figured as a machine, the relationship between rulers and the ruled is also imagined to be susceptible to mechanical laws, rather than to the moral feelings of duty and guidance, loyalty and obedience. As the metaphor becomes common-place ("the foam hardens in to the shell"), Carlyle explains, we forget the figurative nature of our conception.¹² "We are but fettered by chains of our own forging," he concludes, "and which ourselves also can rend asunder. This deep, paralysed subjection to physical objects comes not from Nature, but from our own unwise mode of *viewing* nature" (80-1). Carlyle refers to the invidious effects of metaphor again in the article. In a mechanistic and materialistic age, he writes, people imagine that everything can be achieved by institutions, by social arrangement, nothing by individual effort (74-5):

"Now all this is grounded on little more than a metaphor. We figure society as a 'Machine,' and that mind is opposed to mind as body is to body; whereby two, or at most ten, little minds must be stronger than one great mind. Notable absurdity!" (75). This distinction is the basis of Carlyle's argument against democracy, against tinkering with mere political arrangement: the same weight of number which increases physical strength does not multiply wisdom or moral force; widening the franchise will not produce better government. The relationship of mind to mind, he argues, is quite different from that of body to body, and simply adding together all the intellects of men who do not possess wisdom will not produce a wise man (75). It is the tendency to forget that ways of conceiving of the world are no more than figures of speech which leads the present age to fetishise physical power: "the veneration for the physically Strongest [. . .]. In all senses, we worship and follow after Power" (27: 78-9).

In the transformation of Carlyle's thought, between "Signs of the Times" and *Past and Present*, it is possible to see, as Raymond Williams remarks, the capitulation of his first "civilising insight" to the danger it had described: the submission to the worship of physical strength. (*Culture and Society* 76-7). Carlyle increasingly seems to despair of finding true leaders anywhere except in the very industrial strongmen who were gaining enormous power to dispose of their work force as they pleased, and his vision of social relationships, therefore, "found its final expression in a conception of human relationships which is only an idealised version of industrial class-society" (*Culture and Society* 77). Carlyle's essentially "ennobling" vision, Williams claims, was

corrupted by "the very situation, the very structure of relationships, to which it was opposed" (77). It is true that "Signs of the Times" cautions against taking literally analogies which confute mind and body, spiritual power and physical strength, but, as I have already discussed, even in *Sartor Resartus* Carlyle frequently resorts to the very metaphors he abjures in order to link intellectual activity to physical work. The problem, Carlyle implies, is how one reads these metaphors. At the end of the 1830s, I will suggest, he seems to disregard his own warnings about the constitutive power of metaphor, and he forgets or ignores the analogical nature of his conception of the work of guidance. As a result, in Carlyle's vision, governing or guiding seems to require the same exercise of physical force needed to subdue and order recalcitrant matter. By analogy, that is, the working classes come to be seen as inert matter, material to be shaped rather than subjects to be guided.

Of course, I am not claiming that the literalisation of the metaphor is the sole cause of Carlyle's changing political perspective. There may be something to be gained by seeing the problem in the way I have described it, however. Another way of expressing Williams' insight--that Carlyle's vision finally succumbs to the same situation he warned against--is to say that "Signs of the Times" provides a standard from which we can measure Carlyle's own later deviation. In his 1847 review, Thoreau made this very point: "he supplies us with arguments and illustrations against himself" and this invites us to "try him by [. . .] his own standard" (247, 266). As Thoreau insisted--and he was not the only one among Carlyle's contemporaries to do so--Carlyle's strategy was to "startle and provoke" rather than to inform, to compel action

rather than prompt reflection (235, 253, 267). Such is the discrepancy, indeed, between the warning issued in "Signs of the Times" about the constitutive force of ways of seeing and Carlyle's later, increasingly problematic, use of the metaphors likening mental and manual work, that we might suspect that Carlyle is provoking his readers to try him by his own arguments. In any case, whether or not it was his intention, Carlyle's figuring of the work of guidance eventually succeeded in inciting a response from one of the most prominent of his contemporaries, John Stuart Mill.

Carlyle conceived of writing a discourse on the working class in the spring of 1838 when the Chartist movement began. When parliament rejected the Chartist petition in August 1839, he began working on *Chartism*, which he published as a pamphlet at his own expense because he was unable to find a place for his essay in the political reviews. As in "Corn-Law Rhymes," Carlyle describes the labouring class--the "hitherto mute and irrational"--finding a "voice," but whereas Elliott's voice had been "half audible," the collective voice of the working class is not recognisable as speech at all: "Chartism with its pikes, Swing with its tinder-box," he comments, "speaks a most loud though inarticulate language" (29: 148). He refers repeatedly in the pamphlet to the "great, dumb toiling class which cannot speak" (121); to "these wild inarticulate souls, struggling there, with inarticulate uproar, like dumb creatures in pain, unable to speak what is in them" (122). As in "Corn-Law Rhymes," it is understanding and interpretation that are required: how useful would be a genuine understanding by "the upper classes of society of what it is that the under classes intrinsically mean" (122). Again, understanding and interpretation are, not surprisingly, the services Carlyle finds

himself qualified to offer. Just as he interprets Elliott's poetry, so he translates the inarticulate speech of the working class in order that their real wants can be addressed. His interpretation was familiar to his contemporary readers: the meaning of Chartism is not a demand for an extension of franchise, but a call for better guidance or more government (134, 155, 160). Social malfunction cannot be corrected by democracy, but only by the introduction of rule and order into human relationships (189). The most fundamental of the rights of man is the right to be guided, or ordered, by the wiser and stronger (157-9, 160). Here, as in "Corn-Law rhymes," by representing himself as an interpreter of working-class action, Carlyle seems to place himself outside the social relationship of leading and led. His role is not to "do" any kind of work, but to enable others to do and act: "there can be no acting or doing of any kind, till it be recognised that there is a thing to be done;" "the preliminary of all things, we must repeat, is to know that a thing must needs be done" (155, 166, 190). Although he loudly espouses "work," therefore, Carlyle's own activity, even in his ideal conception of it, remains "strangely anomalous" (*Collected Letters* 7: 25).

Carlyle's strategy for authorising his own interpretation is again to claim to understand the demands of the workers. For Carlyle such "events" as the mammoth working-class demonstration are "written lessons, glaring in huge hieroglyphic picture-writing, that all men may read and know them" (155). Clearly, it is not open to all to know the meaning of theses signs; only the speech of the thinking and speaking classes, specifically of Carlyle himself, can restore to Chartism its proper meaning. The reason that Carlyle erases the clearly articulated demands of the Chartists for political

representation is so that he can substitute his own preferred solution to the condition of the working class while still claiming the authority that speaking for the masses gives him. To those few who can hear, the meaning of Chartism is a demand for more government and better guidance: "Guide me, Govern me! I am mad and miserable, and cannot guide myself!" (157). What this amounts to, as Plotz has nicely capsulated, is that the working class is "ordering itself ordered" (102).¹³

There is an important shift in *Chartism*, illustrative of Carlyle's changing perspective on the reciprocal relationship between governing and governed. In *Sartor Resartus*, the labouring classes provided the speaking classes with food and shelter in exchange for guidance (228); now Carlyle assumes that the speaking classes are the ones who are able to provide food and shelter, even though daily bread is the result of the toil of the dumb millions. By Chartism, the labourer means "food, shelter, due guidance, in return for his labour" (29: 186). Carlyle assumes that the produce of labour already belongs to those who preside over labour. He also finds himself in agreement with the governing class, whom he is supposedly criticising, over some specific legislative measures designed to encourage the labouring classes to work. For example, he begins by attacking the Poor-Law Amendment Act of 1834, which was one of the issues over which he and John Stuart Mill disagreed.¹⁴ Carlyle repudiates the assumption of the new law that the poor man who is willing to work can always find work and is always able to live by his work (128). Further, he argues that well-being is constituted by the quality as well as quantity of employment--the security of employment, the prospects of advancement, and the relationship of the employed to

their employers (126-7, 143). While he denies that work was available to all those who sought it, however, Carlyle concedes that the act of 1834 had its uses, in its centralisation of administration and, especially, in its encouragement of labour. "Let the New Poor Law Administrators be considered as useful labourers," he writes, apparently without irony: "He that will not work according to his faculty, let him perish according to his necessity: there is no law juster than that" (132-3). The act is at least a protection of the thrifty against the thriftless and dissolute. While one would expect, here, for Carlyle to repeat his criticism of a ruling class living off the labour of the manual labourers, he asserts that the law "no work, no recompense" should first of all be enforced on the manual labourer, even while other people from other classes escape the application of the law (132).

The purpose of Carlyle's criticism is to castigate and reform a lazy ruling class, but it is the working class who are assumed to be in need of encouragement to work. Despite his frequent repudiation of the principle of working only for monetary remuneration, Carlyle tacitly recognises that only misery and poverty and necessity--the "prompt nature of hunger" (*Sartor Resartus* 120)--can induce the hard manual labour of supplying the necessities of life. And, by the same token, he seems to admit that other kinds of work, such as the work of governing, are not as susceptible to the dictates of necessity. This recognition is symptomatic of a shift in Carlyle's writing. It is not of itself evidence of a change of sympathy from ruled to rulers, but it is a change in the way the problem is conceived. Which class is it that will not work? Does he aim to convince the ruling class to work, or is he pointing out to them the arduous work to

be done in compelling work among the thriftless population? The changes in Carlyle's thinking about the nature of the problem, as I will now argue, are accompanied by a change in the meaning of his figurative assimilation of guidance to physical labour.

It must be emphasised that it is not at all Carlyle's intention to construct the English labourer as thriftless, since his whole point is that the work of guidance should be equal to the work done by the manual worker. Thus, just as he represents Elliott in such a way as to recommend him to the "loving" guidance of his superiors, in *Chartism*, Carlyle sanitises the English working class by constructing English identity around a common aptitude for practical work. Looking back to English history, he sees the capacity for productive labour as a distinctive facet of national character.

"Were not forests felled, bogs drained, fields made arable, towns built, laws made, and the Thought and Practice of men in many ways perfected?" he inquires (172). The work of making England habitable had been the labour of "brawny arms," "noble hearts," and "wise heads," a cooperative effort by the various classes that indicated a common industriousness and diminished the distance between them (171-2). Early historical events seem to contain later developments as an inevitable consequence, and lead ineluctably to the cotton mills of Manchester. Appealing to an outcome which is difficult to gainsay, Carlyle's extraordinary prose makes English industrialisation seem a realisation of manifest destiny:

The Staffordshire coal-stratum lay side by side with iron strata, quiet since the creation of the world. Water flowed in Lancashire and Lanarkshire; bitumous fire lay bedded in rocks there too [. . .]. But God said Let the iron missionaries

be; and they were. Coal and iron, so long close unregardful neighbours, are wedded together; Birmingham and Wolverhampton, and the hundred Stygian forges, with their fire-throats, and never-resting sledge-hammers, rose into day [. . .]. England, I say, dug out her bitumen-fire, and bade it work. (184-5)

At the same time as it erases the specific agency of physical labourers, Carlyle's poetic celebration of industrial productivity and the triumph of machinery attributes England's industrial pre-eminence to the innate industry of its people throughout history, and establishes the national character as its capacity for productive labor.

The purification of the "slothful" English depends on a contrast with another people, the Irish, against whom Carlyle can predicate a common national identity. The Anglo-Saxon worker cannot find work because he is forced to compete with Irish labourers willing to work for lower wages. While the Saxon has cleared the soil and made it arable and fertile, the Irishman arrives belatedly to undertake any work that can be done "by mere strength of hand and back; for wages that will purchase him potatoes" (138). The noble Saxon worker is impoverished through having to compete with the Irish in an economic system where the only laws regulating the organization of labour are those of supply and demand. Carlyle's point is that wages and work should be protected. The blame for the lowering of wages is transferred from the capitalist system to its victims, however, as Carlyle attributes to the Irish character the depredations which are the result of poverty: "The Irish National character is degraded, disordered, [. . .] immethodic, headlong, violent mendacious [. . .]. There abides he, in his squalor and unreason, in his falsity and drunken violence, as the ready-

made nucleus of degradation and disorder" (137-9). The problem is not that the necessity of doing certain kinds of menial labor has a degrading effect on the Irish worker; rather, the suitedness of the Irish character to the most degrading unskilled work results in the downward spiral of wages to the point where the Saxon worker is driven out, unable to compete in this market for labour (138). If this problem is not solved, writes Carlyle, then the English worker will become as degraded as his Irish counterpart, for the Irish people "circulates not order but disorder through every vein of it" (137). The imputation is that English employers must put aside their rule of buying labour in the cheapest market and take on the real work of responsible leadership.

Too frequently, Carlyle's diagnosis of social problems, not to speak of his proposed solutions, degenerate into banality, so it is necessary to make an effort to recall the problem, not in itself trite, he is addressing. In Carlyle's view, the organisation (the distribution, the recognition, and the reward) of work was the most important social problem facing any society (29: 205). In *Chartism*, he writes to promote the desire for an integrated community, and articulates a vision of the nation based on the organisation of its collective labour capacity. Ostensibly, what threatens the unity of this community is that the speaking classes do not toil, have abdicated the only work by which they could justify their social position. Through Chartist demonstrations, he writes, "the toiling millions of England ask of their English Parliament foremost of all, Canst thou govern us or not? [. . .]. The toiling Classes of mankind declare in their confused but most emphatic way, to the Untoiling, that they

will be governed" (168). As in "Corn-Law Rhymes," the joining of the two classes is effected through the intervention of Carlyle, who, while he appears not to do anything, tells others what to do.

In *Chartism*, Carlyle suggests that the alienation of the toiling from the speaking classes can be rectified only if the latter undertake the work of guidance in the same way that the manual labourers engage in physical toil: "Why does the one toil with his hands, if the other be not to toil, still more unwearidly with heart and head? The brawny craftsman finds it no child's-play to mould his unpliant, rugged masses; neither is guidance of men a dilettantism" (158). The separation of the classes is resolved, that is, by imagining governing as equivalent to physical labour and the governed as inanimate material ("unpliant rugged masses") to be shaped. There could hardly be a clearer illustration of what Hannah Arendt sees as the dangers of metaphors of fabrication when applied to human affairs (*The Human Condition* 220-30). It is worth noting, though, the tentative manner in which the analogy is advanced here; Carlyle often introduces his extravagant figures of speech or of thought with a question, and we are left to infer that guidance, too, is a kind of moulding of unpliant masses of men. The question is answered in the affirmative, however, and becomes an assertion in Carlyle's writings after *Chartism*.

The tendency to see the labouring class rather than the ruling class as the problem becomes more apparent in Carlyle's writings after *Chartism*. *Past and Present* (1843), for example, intensifies the tendency, already apparent in *Chartism*, of seeing the work of governing through an analogy with physical labour. It is this metaphor that

determines the authoritarian tone of the book.¹⁵ *Past and Present* continues the Carlylean critique of the profit-and-loss philosophy of the commercial and industrial middle classes, but, at the same time, Carlyle solves the problem of temporal guidance by calling on middle-class industrialists to become "Captains of Industry" and to take a more active and responsible role in solving the problem of how to organise the work of the nation's "Labouring Millions" (255-73): "The main substance of this immense problem of Organizing Labour, and first of all of Managing the Working Classes, will, it is very clear, have to be solved by those who stand practically in the very middle of it; by those who themselves work and preside over work" (267). The ideal social relationship is still conceived of as one between the labouring masses and a nobility toiling at the work of guidance. But there is a difference. To reiterate Williams' point: Carlyle's conception of social relationships ends up as an "idealised version" of those already pertaining in a capitalist industrial society (*Culture and Society* 77). Making an almost identical point, Vanden Bossche argues that Carlyle's "reliance on the commercially-minded middle class ends up justifying the very commercial spirit he had condemned" (197n37).¹⁶

The tone is different, too. Although Carlyle insists, repeating a point he had made in "Corn-Law Rhymes," that labour is nobler than fighting and that the true epic is now work not battle, he also describes "a battlefield" as "a kind of Quintessence of Labour; Labour distilled into its utmost concentration" (*Past and Present* 191, 192). Labourers are portrayed as heroic soldiers doing battle "now with Necessity, with Barrenness, Scarcity, with Puddles, Bogs, tangled Forests, unkempt Cotton;--now

with the hallucinations of his poor fellow Man" (191). At the beginning of the 1830s, Carlyle occasionally compared working men to God's soldiers on earth (28: 43), and the analogy need not be reactionary in any simple way. John Ruskin's favourite metaphor, almost certainly derived from Carlyle, "soldiers of the ploughshare," is avowedly antimilitaristic and anticapitalist in its intention (*The Library Edition of the Works of John Ruskin* 16: 26; *Unto this Last* 202). As Vanden Bossche has remarked, however, Carlyle's battle metaphors in *Past and Present* suggest that captains of industry are military leaders charged with making order not only of a chaotic world but of a human chaos (Vanden Bossche 115; *Past and Present* 272). In the following passage, for example, regulating men is the same kind of activity as taming the wilderness:

What is immethodic, waste, thou shalt make methodic, regulated, arable; obedient and productive to thee. Wheresoever thou findest Disorder, there is thy eternal enemy; attack him swiftly, subdue him; make Order of him, the subject not of Chaos, but of Intelligence, Divinity and Thee! [. . .]. But above all, where thou findest Ignorance, Stupidity, Brutemindedness [. . .] attack it, I say; smite it widely, unweariedly, and rest not while thou livest and it lives; but smite, smite, in the name of God! (*Past and Present* 201)

As Vanden Bossche summarises, Carlyle's view "entails a transition from compelling belief to compelling obedience [. . .]. Captains of Industry not only turn wasteland into fertile land, but may force others to join them in the task" (115). Carlyle begins by

trying to induce a lazy aristocracy to work for their keep and ends by justifying force to coerce the mutinous masses.

It is not, I think, that work has cease to be valued, but now it is the work of organising and inspiring—and, if need be, of coercing—labour that is principally to be admired. In a curious circular movement, Carlyle instructs the leaders of industry to take on the important work of arranging social labour. However, among those occupations whose work was insufficiently well organised, as Carlyle repeatedly reminded his readers, was that of literary men (5: 158-9, 168). Curiously, then, Carlyle represents writers, as well as manual labourers, as requiring direction. No less than the working classes whose voice he translates in “Corn-Law Rhymes” and in *Chartism*, Carlyle seems to be ordering himself ordered (29: 158; Plotz 102).

As if the justification of force in *Past and Present* had not been clear enough or sufficiently provocative, the point was driven home in an article on the notorious Paraguayan dictator, Dr. Francia, published in the same year as *Past and Present*. Here, Carlyle makes the same legitimating argument for a strong, rigorous military leader; it is the depiction of the labouring population as lazy and immethodic that legitimates the methods employed by Francia. The purpose of the article, quite openly, is to “shock” the “constitutional” sentiments of liberal intellectuals in Britain (29: 271, 281). He describes the Paraguayans as an idle people unfit for “constitutional liberty” (228):

The people of that profuse climate live in a careless abundance, troubling themselves with few things, [. . .] at three in the afternoon, you will find the

entire population just risen from its siesta; slipshod, half-buttoned; sitting in its front verandas open to the street; eating pumpkins with voracity,--sunk to the ears in pumpkins [. . .]. They are a rude people; lead a drowsy life, of ease and sluttish abundance. (287-8)

Francia is the "one man of talent and veracity" willing to toil to drive out sloth and able to "drill" the Paraguayan population into some semblance of order (289, 296, 299, 309, 312), and improvement is only proportional to the cruelty and vigour he exercises (305-6). He first tries the whip to compel work, and finally turns to the "workman's gallows" to threaten all shoddy workmen with death (313-15). Carlyle seems to fantasise about introducing this contrivance in Britain--"Such an institution of society, adapted to our European ways, seems pressingly desirable"--but concedes that it would probably be deemed unacceptable (315).

It is important not to overstate the case for Carlyle's conversion to physical force. Democracy he knew to be inevitable; the problem of political authority in the mid-nineteenth century, as he saw it, was how to reconcile "inevitable Democracy" with "indispensable Sovereignty" (5: 164; *Past and Present* 249). The nation's leaders would have to earn the loyalty of their workers: "no man is, or can henceforth be, the brass-collar thrall of any man; you will have to bind him by far nobler and cunninger methods" (*Past and Present* 249). As an example of such noble methods, Carlyle proposes granting the workers "a permanent *interest* in his enterprise, [. . .] so that it becomes, in practical result, what in essential fact and justice it ever is, a joint enterprise" (278). Moreover, it is worth noting that in *Past and Present*, as in

Chartism, Carlyle characterises the English as a laborious people, as a nation with a particular aptitude for practical labour: "A terrible worker; irresistible against marches, mountains, impediments, disorder, in civilization; everywhere vanquishing disorder, leaving it behind him as method and order" (*Past and Present* 163). Why, then, does he state that the threat of punishment is necessary to compel labour?

One explanation, at least, is that he is trying to provoke a response from liberal intellectuals in England. If this was his intention, then he was successful. For it is possible to see 1843 as the moment when John Stuart Mill's disillusionment with Carlyle began, although the potential for conflict was evident earlier and open disagreement came later. The description of the Paraguayan population anticipates Carlyle's deliberately provocative depiction of former slaves in *An Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question*, an article which, when it appeared in 1849, elicited a caustic reply from Mill.¹⁷ In his reply Mill takes up directly Carlyle's own vexed relationship, as a writer, to the doctrine of work that he propounds.

In the *Occasional Discourse*, Carlyle advocated a return to compulsory labour for the emancipated blacks in the British West Indian colonies. As Catherine Hall has argued, at the time of writing this article, Carlyle was in a minority among British intellectuals in being prepared to speak on behalf of the West Indian planting interest (*White, Male, Middle Class* 269). Since the emancipation of slaves in the British owned colonies in 1834, the economic fortunes of the planters had worsened, and in 1846 the Whig administration threatened to compound their woes by removing the protective duties on sugar (269). The abolitionist sentiment and the free-trade ethos

were closely associated, for Carlyle, with what he considered to be the prejudices of the liberal intellectual formation whose views he is challenging in the *Occasional Discourse*. The article is framed as a lecture delivered to an anti-slavery philanthropic organisation, and this device is clearly meant to signal its criticism of what Carlyle saw as a liberal orthodoxy. In the article the Carlyle represents the Black West Indians as indolently living off the abundant pumpkins that grow in that fertile climate, while the previously fertile colony edges towards ruin, the sugar crop rotting uncut. For Carlyle the situation demonstrated the bankruptcy of laissez-faire; since half an hour of labour a day would suffice to supply the ex-slaves with the necessities of life, they could not be induced to work (29: 350-52). All must work, Carlyle insists in the article, "according to the faculty they have got, making a little more divine this Earth which the gods have given them" (378). He who will not work, shall not eat, and where inducement fails, compulsion, even by the whip, is justified:

[W]ith regard to the West Indies, it may be laid down as a principle [. . .] that no Black man who will not work according to what ability the gods have given him for working, has the smallest right to eat pumpkin, or to any fraction of land that will grow pumpkin, however plentiful such land may be; but has an indisputable and perpetual *right* to be compelled, by the real proprietors of said land, to do competent work for his living. This is the everlasting duty of all men, black or white, who are born into this world. To do competent work, to labour honestly according to the ability given them; for that and for no other purpose was each one of us sent into this world; and woe is to every man

who, by friend or by foe, is prevented from fulfilling this the end of his being. That is the "unhappy" lot: lot equally unhappy cannot otherwise be provided for man. Whatsoever prohibits or prevents a man from this his sacred appointment to labour while he lives on earth,--that, I say, is the man's deadliest enemy; and all men are called upon to do what is in their power or opportunity towards delivering him from that. If it be his own indolence that prevents and prohibits him, then his own indolence is the enemy he must be delivered from: and the first "right" he has,--poor indolent blockhead, black or white,--is, That every unprohibited man, whatsoever wiser, more industrious person may be passing that way, shall endeavour to "emancipate" him from his indolence, and by some wise means, as I said, compel him, since inducing will not serve, to do the work he is fit for. Induce him, if you can: yes, sure enough, by all means try what inducement will do; and indeed every coachman and carman knows that secret without our preaching, and applies it to his very horses as the true method:--but if your Nigger will not be induced? In that case, it is full certain, he must be compelled; should and must; and the tacit prayer he makes (unconsciously, he, poor blockhead), to you, and to me, and to all the world who are wiser than himself, is "Compel me!" For indeed he *must*, or else do and suffer worse,--he as well as we. It were better the work did come out of him! It was the meaning of the gods with him and with us, that his gift should turn to use in this Creation, and not lie poisoning the thoroughfares, as a rotten mass of idleness, agreeable to neither heaven nor

earth. For idleness does, in all cases, inevitably *rot*, and become putrescent;--
and I say deliberately, the very Devil is in *it*. (29: 355-6)

Carlyle argues that it was not the black Africans who had made Jamaica productive, clearing jungles and draining bogs, but the European settlers. The white European is formed by his superior intelligence for the work of guiding, or of compelling, the negro. There is some debate over how far Carlyle colludes with racism in this article; some critics have claimed that the *Occasional Discourse* is a Swiftian satire whose primary motive is to draw attention to the condition of the poor in England and Ireland. While Carlyle's offensive rhetoric cannot be so easily brushed aside, it is almost certainly the case that the real objects of Carlyle's criticism are liberal intellectuals in England, who coupled their expressions of humanitarian concern for the well-being of ex-slaves in Jamaica with a disregard for the suffering caused nearer home by the very system of economic laissez-faire that was put forward as the instrument of emancipation.¹⁸

In the January 1850 edition of *Fraser's Magazine*, an irate Mill published a brief but comprehensive response. In reply to Carlyle's assumption that the master-slave relationship is more humane than that of the employer and employee under capitalism, Mill affirms the principle of the essential equality of all people, and argues that each individual ought to be independent and free to develop his or her own human capacities ("The Negro Question" 92-3). Mill also reveals that there are economic as well as social suppositions underlying Carlyle's argument, and that the interests he advances are those of the planter class (91). What interests me about Mill's reply,

however, is that he avails himself of an opportunity to attack Carlyle's gospel of work: "This pet theory of your contributor about work, we all know well enough, though some persons might not be prepared for so bold an application of it. Let me say a few words on this 'gospel of work'" (90). To give the doctrine of work a rational meaning, says Mill, "it must first be known what he means by work" (90) . It does not mean laborious exertion (since hunting for game involves as much muscular fatigue as ploughing the land); it does not mean useful exertion (since Carlyle constantly scoffs at the idea of utility); it does not mean earning a living (since the population to whom Carlyle refers do actually cultivate the pumpkins they consume) (90). There is nothing laudable, Mill argues, in work for its own sake, in work leading on to work upon work and so on without end. Neither "turning up the earth, nor driving a shuttle or a quill" can be an ends in themselves, nor the end of human existence (90-1). In fact, for Mill, the inability to distinguish the objects worthy of labour is one of the evils of the present time:

In opposition to the "gospel of work," I would assert the gospel of leisure, and maintain that human beings *cannot* rise to the finer attributes of their nature compatibly with a life filled with labour. I do not include under the name labour such work, if work it be called, such work as is done by writers and affordance of "guidance," an occupation which, let alone the vanity of the thing, cannot be called by the same name with real labour, the exhausting, stiffening, stupefying toil of many kinds of agricultural and manufacturing labourers. To reduce very greatly the quantity of work required to carry on

existence, is as needful to distribute it more equally; and the progress of science, and the increasing ascendancy of justice and good sense, tend to this result.

There is a portion of work rendered necessary by the fact of each person's existence: no one could exist unless work, to a certain amount, were done either by or for him. Of this each person is bound, in justice, to perform his share; and society has an incontestable right to declare to every one that, if he work not, at this work of necessity, neither shall he eat, [. . .] let the whole produce belong to those who do the work which produces it. (91)

This is Mill at his most socialistic; the whole produce of labour belongs to those who actually labour, and all burdensome, socially necessary work should be shared equally among members of a community.¹⁹ By this criterion, says Mill, the whole produce of the West Indies would go to the ex-slaves, who in fact supplied the "thews and sinews" of making the West Indian colonies productive in the first place (91-2). The African manual worker could have accomplished more without the "guidance" of the white European coloniser than the latter could have done without the black slave (92).

The aspect of Carlyle's "bold application" of his doctrine of work that especially annoys Mill, and which he takes the opportunity of commenting on, is Carlyle's metaphoric assimilation of guidance to physical labour, by which, Mill believed, Carlyle intends to glorify, among other things, his own work of thinking. It is worth setting Mill's criticism of Carlyle against what he wrote elsewhere concerning the importance of purely intellectual work. In *Principles of Political Economy*, first

published in 1848, only two years prior to his reply to Carlyle, Mill describes the "labour of invention and discovery" as mental work which, if less immediate, is just as important to the ultimate product as manual labour (*Principles of Political Economy* 1: 41-2). The "labour of the savant, or speculative thinker," the labour of "mere thought," is significant even from a "purely productive and materialistic point of view" (42-3). Because of its influence on the productive labour of society, society should employ part of its revenues in "remunerating such labour, as a highly productive part of its expenditure" (43). Although Mill's predilection for laissez-faire is partly based on the view that any increase in responsibility and power of government will tend to oppress the "originality of mind and individuality of character which are the only source of any real progress" (2: 939-40)--hence, his enthusiasm for the provisions of the new poor-law--he argues that because the labour of "mere thought" benefits the entire community, the government should provide means of support to enable a "learned class" to devote a sufficient portion of time to their "peculiar pursuits" (968-9). Again, in an 1840 article, Mill had praised Coleridge for, among other achievements, vindicating "the principle of an endowed class for the cultivation of learning and for diffusing its results among the community (Mill, "Coleridge" 148). Mill was in agreement with Carlyle, therefore, over the necessity of providing for a clerical class to educate and guide the community. Mill does not really tackle the question of why government should not bear the responsibility for other kinds of mutually-beneficial labour, such as providing for the material needs of the community.

For Mill, clearly, some species of mental labour are "real" enough, and even a privileged sort of labour.

The *Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question* succeeded, as it was surely intended to do, in provoking Mill's ire. Although Mill attacks Carlyle's assimilation of the intellectual work of guidance to material labour in this article, it is worth pointing out that he was free to criticise Carlyle's representation of guidance as "real labour" well before 1850; the metaphors yoking intellectual and physical work were a constant element of Carlyle's social criticism in the 1830s, and, indeed, a staple of intellectuals' self-representation before Carlyle. Mill's remarks on Carlyle's representation of brain work, we might suspect, are not the real issue, but are intended, primarily, to form a moral basis for his political and ideological disagreement with Carlyle. Mill's comments call to mind Frederic Jameson's chastisement of other materialist critics, which I discussed briefly in chapter one, for their metaphoric assimilation of intellectual to material labour (*The Political Unconscious* 45). I suggested that Jameson's comments, insofar as they give a sense of political and terminological conscientiousness to his position in an intellectual debate with other Marxist intellectuals, are no less self-serving than those of the intellectuals he criticises; the appropriation of the real, genuine "work" of physical labourers appears as a trump card, we might say, in a dispute between the thinking classes. Similarly, Mill's scrupulous re-appropriation of the "real" labour of the masses, from Carlyle's metaphoric misuse, adds moral force to his disagreement with him on the issue of Jamaican slavery. Mill's protestations of

concern for those who do the "real" labour, Carlyle might have countered, are not supported by his attitude of "let alone" on the issue of poor law relief.

By drawing attention to the constitutive powers of the metaphors by which intellectuals represent their own activity, I have argued, Carlyle highlights the problems of appropriating physical labour in intellectual self-representations; his ambiguous, parodic style of writing, however, makes the question of whether or not he intended to dramatise the dangers of the metaphoric assimilation of mental to manual labour, finally, an open one. Mill's criticism of Carlyle's unfettered use of the analogy linking intellectual and physical labour is valid and necessary. It is possible, though, that Mill's censure of Carlyle's construction of guidance ("if work it be called") raises the questions that Carlyle, throughout his writings, wants to provoke. Clearly, Mill is correct to say that the intellectual work of thinking, speaking, and writing cannot be called by the same name as the "exhausting, stiffening, stupefying toil of many kinds of agricultural and manufacturing labourers" (Mill, "The Negro Question" 90). Why is it, then, that the analogy between mental and manual labour is such a persistent trope in intellectuals' self-representations? How is it that the same analogy appears in ideologically competing discourses? These are the questions I have been addressing in this thesis, and, in conclusion, I will briefly summarise my argument.

¹ All references to Carlyle's writings, unless otherwise stated, are to the Centenary Edition of Carlyle's works, cited by volume and page number.

² Hence, as Treadwell writes, the "disconcerting quality of his paeans to labour" is that "labour appears as its own reward" (230). Carlyle's indebtedness to German idealism has been exhaustively traced by Harrold (209-12; *Sartor Resartus*, introduction xxviii-xxxvii, lvi-lvii). Information on Carlyle's upbringing and his early anxiety about finding work is taken from Kaplan's biography (52, 55-6, 65, 78-80, 87, 98, 153, 167-68).

³In addition to the work of Harrold and Kaplan, I have found helpful Vanden Bossche's critical interpretation of Carlyle's career as the "search for authority" (13). Two other critics who deal with Carlyle's claim for cultural prestige must be mentioned. Catherine Hall has written on the struggle for intellectual prestige between Carlyle and Mill over the Governor Eyre controversy in 1965 ("Competing Masculinities: Thomas Carlyle, John Stuart Mill, and the Case of Governor Eyre" in *White, Male, Middle Class* 255-95; and a later version of the same article "The Economy of Intellectual Prestige"), while Plotz discusses the way Carlyle appropriates the rhetorical strategy of the Chartists to underpin his own intervention in the public sphere. Recent writing on Carlyle and "work" or "labour" is primarily concerned with the ideological valence of Carlyle's rhetoric. Treadwell, for example, brings out the ambiguity of Carlyle's representation of the work of writing in *Sartor Resartus* in order

to make visible Carlyle's "ideological construction of labour": Carlyle invokes both the self-sufficiency of mere honest industry and an imposed ideological framework where labour is valued for some transcendental purpose which it signifies (234-6). See also Ulrich ("The Re-Inscription of Labour in Carlyle's *Past and Present*"). While work and labour are recurring motifs in Carlyle criticism, no critic has focused Carlyle's use of the mental/ manual analogy.

⁴ As Vanden Bossche points out, proponents of economic freedom generally advocated increased democracy (6). In Carlyle's perspective, the principle of freedom destroys the sense of social responsibility and atomises individuals; hence, he advocated a return to hierarchical authority (5-14).

⁵ For a detailed discussion of the vexed relationship of middle-class writers to the institution of the literary marketplace, see Poovey (101-8).

⁶ Ford Madox Brown's picture *Work* (Figure 1), which I discussed in the chapter one, captures what I consider to be Carlyle's own sense of the intellectual's equivocal relationship to the labour he espouses. While Brown's written explication clearly recapitulate Carlyle's own idealised self-image--"two men who appear as having nothing to do. These are the brain-workers, who, seeming to be idle, work, and are the cause of well-ordained work and happiness in others" (Hueffer 189-90)--the picture itself works against the commentary: Carlyle is depicted "leering," in Barlow's description, "on the margins of *Work*" (53).

⁷ Carlyle shared enough common ground with the Saint-Simonians for there to develop between him and Gustave D'Eichtal a regular sympathetic correspondence, and for Carlyle to translate Saint-Simon's *Nouveau Christianisme* (Kaplan 154-6). On Carlyle's indebtedness to the Saint-Simonians, see Shine. While it is true that Carlyle kept his distance from traditional politics in the early 1830s, Kaplan suggests that Carlyle's elliptical and aphoristic style was also a cover for his radical sympathies (171, 184).

⁸ Haney is not the only critic to make this point. Mellor, for example, claims that *Sartor Resartus* is intended as a "goad to action" (133). In a similar vein, Treadwell suggests that the expulsion of Teufelsdröckh at the end of *Sartor Resartus* signifies Carlyle's rejection of Teufelsdröckh and of a kind of writing that substitutes "symbolic figuration for action": "O enough, enough of likenings and similitudes" (Treadwell 225, 227, 241; *Sartor Resartus* 287). On this same point, see also Reide (93, 97) and Barlow (45).

⁹ Maidment points out that that Carlyle's essay is both generous and dismissive, appreciative of Elliott's energy and honesty, but condescending about his "verbal clumsiness" and "naive indignation" (297).

¹⁰ As Vanden Bossche points out, the waste of Burns' genius was proof, constantly adduced by Carlyle, that the present organisation of literature, on the principle of free trade, was the worst possible one, for poets could not be adequately judged by the laws of the market (5: 166, 189-92; Vanden Bossche 186 n22).

¹¹ The story as it is told in *Numbers* is pieced together from various sources and is hardly without contradiction. My information on the Balaam oracles is taken from Noth (166-94). In a secondary interpretation of the Balaam story of *Numbers*, one not to the point of the original, Balaam goes astray for the sake of profit. This is how Carlyle connects Balaam to the English ruling class.

¹² In *Sartor Resartus*, Diogenes Teufelsdröckh's view is that all language is figurative, all metaphor, alive or dead (73). In *Past and Present*, Carlyle says that even the coldest word was once a glowing new original metaphor (131-2).

¹³ In an insightful article on *Chartism*, Plotz describes the ingenious though paradoxical strategy by which Carlyle appropriated the physical presence of the crowd to further his own claims (90). Carlyle relies on the priority of action over speech--ascribing to the working classes an understanding superior to that of the non-labouring speaking classes of the condition of the nation--in order to insist on the importance of the message the crowd conveys. At the same time as he deprives the crowd of any language in which to explain their wants, he insists on his own ability to understand and explain the crowd better than they explain themselves (90, 97). True understanding is pre-linguistic but must be given a voice somehow, and Carlyle himself explains the crowd's true desire: more guidance (102). Carlyle both disputes the Chartists' own claims and bolsters his own claims by appropriating the "threatening physicality" of the crowd (95, 107).

The brilliance of Carlyle's response to the Chartist phenomena, according to Plotz, was the "remarkable efficacious logic he finds--on short notice and under the pressure of rapidly changing events--to wrest control of those demonstrations from the hands of the Chartists who had actually taken part in them" (95). I must agree with Plotz that Carlyle's strategy of making the rational irrational and then providing a competing interpretation is particularly audacious in *Chartism* because he is responding to a contemporary English crowd (112n51). But while Carlyle's response was "lightning-fast" (94), he was not thinking on his feet entirely. *The French Revolution* had already employed the same "trope of depersonalization" by which he makes agency uncertain in *Chartism* (2: 270, 276, 281, 286; Plotz 95-6). As I have been arguing, Carlyle is doing here what Burke and Cobbett had done, which is to claim to understand the grievances of the working classes and to claim to speak of and for the masses. Throughout the 1830s, Carlyle claimed to understand the speech of the labouring population both to attack the ruling classes and to give weight to his own idiosyncratic interpretation of events.

¹⁴ When Carlyle approached Mill with his projected essay on Chartism for the *London and Westminster Review*, Mill refused to countenance his criticism of, among other things, the new poor law. (*Collected Letters* 10: 15; 11: 117; 12: 11; Vanden Bossche 94-5).

¹⁵ Carlyle began writing *Past and Present* in August 1842, completing it within a few months. The condition of the working people had, if anything, worsened by that

year. A series of bad harvests since 1836 and the detested Corn Laws kept the price of bread high. Too, a serious economic depression led to falling wages and to high unemployment. In 1842 one person in eleven was a pauper, and the Poor Law Amendment Act of 1834 had abolished outdoor relief. M. W. Flinn has written that the "deprivation commonly associated with the 'Hungry Forties' might, with more accuracy, be ascribed to the period 1838-42 than to the whole decade" (Chadwick 42). In the spring of 1842, a second, much larger, Chartist petition was presented to Parliament, and summer brought a series of strikes and riots throughout industrial cities.

¹⁶ Vanden Bossche makes this point apropos the *Latter-Day Pamphlets* (1850), but, as he recognises, the problem is already budding within *Past and Present* (115, 197n37).

¹⁷ Carlyle's *Occasional Discourse on the Negro Question* was published in *Fraser's Magazine* 40 (December 1849) and reprinted as a separate pamphlet in 1853 as *Occasional Discourse on the Nigger Question*. Mill's reply, "The Negro Question," was published in *Fraser's Magazine* 41 (January 1850). The cooling off between Carlyle and Mill is hard to date exactly. Mill's first public criticism was over Carlyle's "Repeal of the Union" article in 1848 (Seigel 304), but the two men disagreed over many issues even when they were closest (Kaplan 225-6, 235). Vanden Bossche notes the changed emphasis of Carlyle's *Latter-Day Pamphlets*, of which the *Occasional Discourse* is a precursor. These later works were and are offensive not so much

because of change in doctrine, but because Carlyle "shifts the blame for social problems from the ruling classes to the working class" (133). Evidence of this shift occurs as early as *Chartism*, as I have shown.

¹⁸ On the background to Carlyle's *Occasional Discourse*, see Campbell, Christianson, Tarr, and Hall (*White Male Middle Class* 268-74). Collins advances an argument that exonerates Carlyle from the charge of racism on the grounds of the "parodic ambiguity" of the *Occasional Discourse*. Vanden Bossche disagrees and argues that at some level rhetoric is meaning (202n 67).

¹⁹ For another statement of this socialistic perspective, see Mill's *Autobiography* (175). The argument Mill rehearses in his reply to Carlyle's *Occasional Discourse*, that the burden of physical labour should be reduced and that the necessary labour of supplying food, shelter, fuel, ought to be parceled out equally among the members of a community, is similar to Godwin's in *An Enquiry Concerning Political Justice* (474-5, 711-13, 752-4).

Afterword

For Marx and Engels, writing in *The German Ideology* (1845-6), the most rudimentary form of social, as opposed to natural, division of labour was the separation of manual and mental work (51-2), a view that was shared by another of Carlyle's contemporaries, John Ruskin. It is possible to suggest that one reason for the historical durability of the analogy assimilating intellectual activity to physical labour is the intellectual's sense of this fundamental splitting of human society and of human faculties. For the separation of hand and head not only creates two distinct classes, but also produces incomplete human beings: a machine or instrument, on one hand, and a deracinated intellect on the other. As I suggested in chapter one, with reference to John Jewel's defence of the labour of kings and bishops, in general terms it is true that the analogy always seems to have had both the intention of alleviating the non-manual worker's guilt over this injustice and the ideological effect of obfuscating the unequal distribution of labour and reward in society. This sort of generalisation, however, does not help to explain why intellectuals have continued to draw on this clichéd figure in their representations of their own activity, nor, more importantly, does it help to explain why it is used to articulate different ideological positions.

It is in the period following the French Revolution, I argue, that the analogy between mental and manual labour begins to assume a contemporary ideological resonance. With the entry of the mass of the population into the political equation, intellectuals asserted their relationship to ordinary labourers as a way of consolidating

their own authority vis-à-vis other non-manual labourers. By grounding their own work in the real labour done on the land, writers like Burke and Cobbett attacked other intellectuals whose activity, they alleged, was less rooted in the material life of the community. Burke's "sweat of the mind," I claim in chapter two, was a way of distinguishing himself from his political opponents, however defined. Burke's appropriation of the activity of the labouring poor, I argue in chapter three, presented itself as a problem for Cobbett of how to represent himself to his labouring audience; Cobbett tries to repudiate Burke's easy assimilation of writing and thinking to physical labour, at the same time as he tries to create a solidarity between himself and his readers by asserting the similarity of their labours. For Hazlitt, I contend in chapter four, the analogy with manual work was primarily a way of articulating what he takes to be an internal stratification of the republic of letters, according to social and political rather than intellectual criteria; I suggest, too, that Hazlitt eventually concludes that the "proletarianised" writer must form his political alliance with a community of manual labourers rather than with other intellectuals. Finally, I argue in chapter five that Carlyle employs the analogy, not primarily to encourage the identification of writing and manual toil, but to support his criticisms of an "unworking" ruling class. I argued, too, that Carlyle draws attention to the constitutive force of the metaphors by which intellectuals represent themselves. While all of these writers assert the similarity or identity of mental and manual work, they also acknowledge the irreducible difference of the two kinds of activity, and it is this

recognition that produces the tensions and contradictions that I have found in their writings.

The propensity of writers and academics to represent intellectual activity by invoking the labour of other kinds of workers has persisted, as I argue in chapter one. Moreover, as I have intimated, and as I will now explain in more detail, even a writer's sincere disavowal of the equivalence between mental and manual work, such as Mill's or Jameson's, may have polemical motives. In the second chapter of *The Road to Wigan Pier*, a book profoundly influenced by the tradition of reportage of which Cobbett's *Rural Rides* is a forerunner, George Orwell demonstrates, in a literal and highly self-conscious way, how the figures that ground his own intellectual activity in more elemental types of labour serve as the basis for the deprecation of other intellectuals. "In the metabolism of the Western world," Orwell asserts, at the beginning of the chapter, "the coal-miner is second only to the man who ploughs the soil. He is a sort of grimy caryatid upon whose shoulders nearly everything that is not grimy is supported" (19). Then, in a dozen pages, Orwell records his own experience following the miners in their day's work. He then repeats his conviction, using a different metaphor, that all life depends on the fundamental importance of this rudimentary labour: "The lamp-lit world down there is as necessary to the daylight as the root is to the flower" (30). Orwell describes his relationship to the manual worker, of whom the miner is the type, in yet another analogy: "it keeps us alive, and we are oblivious of its existence [. . .] we are capable of forgetting it as we forget the blood in our veins" (31). The extent to which his own life and work depends on this prior

labour prompts Orwell to voice his own feeling of inferiority, an admission that is made into the occasion for a characteristic attack on other intellectuals: "It raises in you a momentary doubt about your own status as an 'intellectual' and a superior person generally, [. . .] it is only because the miners sweat their guts out that superior persons can remain superior. You and I and the editor of the *Times Lit. Supp.*, and the Nancy poets and the Archbishop of Canterbury and Comrade X, author of *Marxism for Infants*" (31). An air of indisputable truth and self-effacing honesty undergirds Orwell's suggestion, for this is the nub, that his own radical credentials are more genuine, and his own work more real, than those belonging to what he slightly refers to as the enlightened left. By chronicling his own movements underground, Orwell has already made sure that the "I" of this passage is able to denounce his fellow intellectuals from a secure footing.

The same critical strategy is usually employed less reflectively, however. Hence, to return to Frederic Jameson's rebuke to other materialist critics in *The Political Unconscious*, Jameson, like Orwell, can be understood as bolstering his leftist credentials and his intellectual authority when he asserts the essential difference of mental and manual labour:

One cannot, without intellectual dishonesty, assimilate the 'production' of texts [. . .] to the production of goods by factory workers: writing and thinking are not alienated labor in that sense, and it is surely fatuous for intellectuals to seek to glamorize their tasks--which for the most part can be subsumed under the rubric of the elaboration, reproduction, or critique of ideology--by assimilating

them to real work on the assembly line and to the experience of resistance of matter in genuine manual labor. (45)

It would not be impertinent to suggest that Jameson's assertion of difference can be as obfuscating as the homology he censures. Part of the problem is that he neglects to reveal the material conditions of his own criticism. Not all intellectuals occupy identical positions of privilege, as Hazlitt was at pains to point out. If Jameson does not feel that intellectual activity is labour, one might respond, it is partly because the labour of the academy is not distributed equally.

What I have called intellectuals' contrapuntal understanding of mental work is evinced as much by attempts to distinguish mental and manual labour as by attempts to identify similarities between them, and continues today. As evidence of this I will mention the title of the editor's column of the March 1998 edition of *PMLA*, written by Martha Banta in her role as president of the Modern Language Association, "Mental Work, Metal Work." The article engages a debate on the role of the intellectual in the twenty-first century, begun in an earlier edition of the journal (*PMLA* 112. 5 [1997]: 1121-41). The argument of Banta's column is that intellectual work cannot be judged by standards--primarily those of enhanced productivity--appropriate to material production (199, 205). This is a defensible position. Nevertheless, Banta makes use, perhaps self-consciously, of hackneyed metaphors--academics are "toilers [. . .] in intellectual vineyards" she says--which suggest that intellectuals labour just as assiduously as manual labourers (199, 206). More problematic is her attempt to distinguish intellectual from physical labour by the passion that ought to be attached to

doing it: "passion does not easily fit into sanctioned programs for rational, productive behaviour, [. . .] passion is, should be, part of the life of the mind" (206). Rather more prescriptively, she tells her readers how authentic passion is to be recognised: "Joy: remember that feeling? If you do not, try to regain it. If you never had it, then you ought not to be in this business" (206). "If one can still believe in the value of mental work," she concludes, mixing Walter Pater with Julien Benda, "the hard, gemlike flame of passionate intensity will return" (208). Again, it hardly needs to be pointed out that "joy" in academic work might depend on the position one occupies in the profession, although this counter seems not to have crossed Banta's mind. In focusing on the mental/ metal division, she, like Jameson, assumes that mental work can best be understood in relation to its material other, rather than according to the internal divisions and stratifications which obtain within the academy.

Historically, the meaning of the category of the intellectual has been continually redefined in response to events and to changing material conditions. Clearly the role of an intellectual today cannot be defined in the same way as it was in Britain in the Romantic period, for example. This makes all the more surprising, therefore, the tenacity of particular strategies of self-representation. If it is true, as Edward Said states in the passage which I have used as an epigraph to this thesis, that it matters how intellectuals represent themselves to themselves and their audiences, and if it is true that intellectual identities are formed, in part, by their own representational practices, then it is important to recognise that those practices have a

history. It is one especially enduring aspect of that history that I have tried to elucidate in this thesis.

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